

**Purchase intention of South African youth and alcohol advertising through social media
influencers**

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DECLARATION

I, Sikhanyiso Mdlalose, declare that this research article is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in the Graduate School of Business Administration, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

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Signed at ...Ferndale....

On the 26th day of February 2024

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The study aims to investigate the purchase intention of South African youth between ages 18 to 25 and alcohol advertising through social media influencers.

Theoretical approach: The conceptual model of the study draws inspiration and synergies from the elaboration likelihood model theory, source credibility theory, social learning theory and source internalisation and source identification theories, based on previous persuasion and influencer marketing literature.

Design/methodology/analysis: The study employs a quantitative research design, utilising self-administered questionnaires in the form of online survey as primary method of data collection. The study population consists of individuals between the ages of 18 to 25 who have internet access and active on social media. The study analysis is dominated by descriptive tests and multiple linear regression models to test given hypotheses.

Findings: A total of 346 respondents data collected, the study affirmed positive correlation between social media influencers and purchase intent from alcohol advertising. It revealed that when people identify with influencers, they become attracted to them, they trust them more, and are more inclined to purchase advertised products, particularly alcohol in this study. Additionally, internalisation enhances trust and positive responses to advertisements. However, while influencer match-up affects purchase intention, influencer trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise seem to have less impact. Nonetheless, younger demographics tend to trust and identify with influencers, significantly influencing their product purchase decisions.

Practical implications: Authorities must relook the adequacy of alcohol advertising regulations and practices in protecting impressionable youths from SMI advertising. It is also important to educate the youths that SMI advertising may not mirror true life realities and should be emulated with care or not be emulated at all.

Originality/value: The study contributes to SMI marketing literature, within the context of alcohol advertising as well as youth in South Africa. There is lack of literature providing context of social media influencers and alcohol advertising in South Africa and Africa.

Keywords: social media influencers, youths, alcohol advertising, purchase intent, South Africa

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In recent years, the extensive use of alcohol among South African youth has rapidly increased, which has been mainly cited to be due to high unemployment and inequality (Cupido, 2021). The rapid increase in alcohol usage amongst the youth has been compounded by the socio-psychological challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic era (Calina, et al., 2021). According to Nilsson et al. (2022), the Covid-19 era resulted in many of the youth finding refuge in social media, which became their primary medium of entertainment and behavioural influence. Furthermore, social media platforms experienced an influx of influencer marketing as a tactic by brands to reach consumers due to the limited movement enforced by the government during the pandemic. Alcohol sellers and manufacturers were among the many users of influencer marketing in attempts to grow their brands during the pandemic. Investment in influencer marketing has since increased year on year (Crouth, 2021). There appears to be minimal to no regulatory regime to manage the use of SM influencers in the alcohol advertising space. The apparent lack of regularity systems may facilitate the consumption of alcohol among the youth which is problematic. It is against this background that alcohol social media advertisements through influencers have succeeded in penetrating the South African youth of ages between 18 to 25.

This study investigated the persuasive nature of social media influencers in increasing young alcohol consumers' purchase intent using source identification and internalisation (SII) and social learning (SLT) as theoretical frameworks. The source identification and source internalisation theory introduced by Kelman (1961) seeks to understand social media influencers' effectiveness on customer cognitive processing and ability to persuade consumer attitudes, or behaviour into purchasing a product (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016). The social learning theory was introduced by Bandura (1963). It is popular among marketing and advertising literature who use it in attempts to understand and explain the effects of social agents (social media influencers) on consumer consumption behaviour (Kurdi, et al., 2022).

1.2 Background of the Study

A research report produced by Zenith predicted global alcohol advertising spending to reach \$7.7bn by 2023 exceeding the pre-Covid-19 era (Zenith, 2021). In return, this investment in

advertising expenditure was predicted to produce sales of close to \$900bn. In 2012 alone, South Africa's alcohol advertising spend was close to R2bn, roughly 5% of total advertising spend (Morojele, et al., 2018). Judging from the return on ad investment within the global market, it can be assumed that consumption in SA will significantly increase. Hence, the continuous growth in advertising for alcohol brands, as the yields become very favourable for-profit margin goal-oriented businesses. General advertising, alongside alcohol advertising, relies heavily on traditional marketing tools such as television, radio, and out-of-home media, to reach and promote their brands and services to the mass audience (Ansari et al., 2019). When the internet was in its nascent phase, these tools were effective mechanisms to build brand image and awareness. However, the report by Zenith (2021) suggests a migration, particularly amongst the youth, towards digital media and thus foresee brands reciprocating through their advertising spend with the growth of online advertising increasing from 21% in 2019 to 30% in 2030.

As a result of the exponential growth of digital marketing, a recent report from the World Health Organisation (WHO) raised concern about how sophisticated and advanced online advertising tools have become (WHO, 2022). Particular attention has been paid to the ease of how young consumers are being targeted and exposed to alcohol advertising. Several studies have connected alcohol advertising to increased chances of alcohol consumption among youths as well as the exposure of minors and adolescents to alcoholic products (Jernigan et al., 2016; Monteiro et al., 2017; Hendriks et al., 2020).

According to WHO (2022), an increase in alcohol advertising through social media is forecasted to collect, build and attract millions of audiences and data points. This allows brands and marketers to be able to select and target audiences based on multiple variables such as demographics, geographics, psychographics, interests and behaviours with targeted messaging. The growth in social media advertising is due to the cost efficiencies and effective reach compared to traditional advertising, as brands have proven to reach up to 600% return on investment (Noel et al., 2020; DeFazio, 2023). Despite the advantages, alcohol advertising on social media through the use of social media influencers is towing on the responsible marketing line, the same regulations brands have committed to uphold. This study also explored the perceived effectiveness of regulation on alcohol advertising through social media influencers amongst South African youth 18 years and older. Youth between the ages of 18 – 25 have been

highlighted as most vulnerable to risky behaviour because of alcohol consumption (SACENDU, 2019).

Social media has become a prominent platform for advertising and promoting alcohol, with social media influencers at the forefront of this trend (Marjerison et al., 2020). Many brands have recognised the reach and engagement that social media influencers can provide and so, have continued to create content that is highly interactive, direct and easily accessible to the youth who are perceived to be impressionable and trend-orientated (de Castro, O'Reilly, & Carthy, 2021). Findings from the 2021 Social Media Landscape report, saw a 10% increase year-on-year from 29.4% of brands indicating the use of influencers for their marketing strategies (Crouth, 2021) Social media influencers are embedded in young people's lives, as they spend large amount of time on social media every day with constant exposure to influencer content (de Castro & O'Reilly, 2021).

For this study, social media influencers were defined as individuals who regularly produce content, with a status of knowledge in a certain field and have built up a sizeable following of engaged followers (Lou & Yuan, 2019). They can exert influence over others and create value useful to brands in terms of marketing (Gross & Wangenheim, 2018; Lou & Yuan, 2019).

1.3 Research problem

Alcohol use among young persons is a growing problem in South Africa. As a problem, it has many adverse effects on health and behaviour. It is associated with violence, crime, unemployability and many deaths among young people (NYDA, 2022). The *Status of Youth Report 2022* produced by NYDA notes that the 20–24-year age cohort had the highest percentage of alcohol consumers with 68,3% of males and 35,2% of females in this group being active drinkers (NYDA, 2022). The growth of this problem occurs in a commercial environment where online advertising, including using social media influencers is growing significantly (Zenith, 2021). It is the above association that constitutes this study's problem. Social media influencers can influence and change people's perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of lifestyle choices and entice people to purchase or use a certain product or service (Solomon, 2020). Despite this, policymakers have not caught up with the complexity of digital alcohol advertising especially influencer marketing, leaving a loophole for an even greater influence to increased alcohol consumption (Barry et al., 2015; Aiken et al., 2018; Noel, Sammartino, & Rosenthal, 2020). Aiken et al. (2018) point the reason for the ineffective and lack of alcohol code adherence is that most alcohol industries are self-regulated.

The problem also occurs in a world where various research gaps limit the fullest understanding of its nature. Despite extensive research showing the link between alcohol advertising and increased positive attitudes towards alcohol consumption among adolescents and young adults (Jernigan et al., 2016; Morojele et al., 2018; Aiken et al., 2018; Hendriks et al., 2020) highlight a critical knowledge gap: the lack of research on contemporary digital media platforms influence of youth's alcohol purchase intentions. Campbell and Chung (2022) further assert that the majority of literature and content on social media alcohol advertisements has been carried out outside the African continent and South Africa. Many studies have been carried out in the Americas and Australia (Hendriks et al., 2020) or the United Kingdom (Atkinson et al., 2017). Ezenwafor et al. (2021) believe that for an African continent that shows exponential growth in social media usage, it is not reciprocated in the lack and scarcity of literature on SMI and purchase intention in the continent. This study builds on the insight noted by the abovementioned authors, there is limited research that focuses on SMI on alcohol advertising in South Africa, that investigates the 18 – 25-year-old age group. Therefore, this paper seeks to close this gap in the literature by analysing the effect of alcohol advertising through social media influencers on the purchase intent of South African youths between the ages of 18 to 25.

1.4 Objectives

- i. To assess whether identification and internalisation have a positive effect on perceived social media influencers' perceived trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness as well as product match-up.
- ii. To examine whether people perceive ads differently based on influencer marketing.
- iii. To analyse the factors that influence purchase intention based on influencer ads.

1.5 Justification of study

Extant literature has shown that young people can be influenced by alcohol ads, which can change how they view drinking (Jernigan et al., 2016; Morojele et al., 2018; Aiken et al., 2018; Hendriks et al., 2020). A study by Noel et al. (2020) looked at 25 studies and found that seeing alcohol ads online is linked to drinking more and engaging in risky drinking habits. Other studies before that also found that exposure to alcohol ads might make teens drink a bit more (Jernigan et al., 2016; Scott et al., 2017; Jackson et al., 2018). Furthermore, concerns have been raised about the vulnerability of young people. According to Jernigan et al. (2017), those who are more exposed to alcohol advertising are eventually more likely to start drinking and binge drinking. Morojele et al. (2018) surveyed 869 teens in South Africa and found that those who

saw alcohol ads and were interested in them were more likely to drink. A study in Australia by Aiken et al. (2018) found that teens were attracted to alcohol ads and this made them more likely to drink and want to buy alcohol.

Digital alcohol advertising has greater potential to influence young people due to the amount of time spent on the internet and the ease of accessibility to the constant exposure to alcohol advertising and its appeal (Campbell & Chung, 2022). Moreover, Hendriks et al. (2020) discovered through their study the amount of alcohol content on Instagram (i.e. 63.5%) deriving from influencers followed by adolescents and how appealing content looked is directly correlated to an increase in alcohol consumption amongst adolescents. Moreover, over 80% of millennials are more receptive to social media influencer content and therefore can influence their purchase intent towards brands (Gartner, 2019).

This research, hence, seeks to investigate the purchase intention of South African youth and alcohol advertising through social media influencers. This research attempts to contribute and evolve the conversations to the latest digital media tactics of alcohol advertising targeting the youth and the impact it has on alcohol consumption. From a policy perspective, the insights from this study can inform the urgent need for adaptation and improved policies to protect consumers as well as hold alcohol brands and social media influencers responsible and accountable. In addition, the study findings can be beneficial for practitioners in the alcohol industry to take more careful and responsible measures in promoting alcohol.

1.6 Delimitations of the study

The parameters within which this study was conducted are known as delimitations. The delimitations for this study were:

The study was limited to the age group of 18 – 25 years old.

The study was limited to those who had access to the Internet.

1.7 Operational Definitions

Below are some definitions of key terms and concepts used in this study:

Social media influencer

Social media influencers are individuals who regularly produce content, with a status of knowledge in a certain field and have built up a sizeable following of engaged followers (Lou

& Yuan, 2019). They can influence others and create value useful to brands in terms of marketing (Gross & Wangenheim, 2018; Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Purchase intention

Purchase intention, for this study's purpose, was defined as the total of one's cognitive, emotional and behavioural tendencies toward using, adopting and paying for a certain product or service (Dadwal et al., 2020).

Advertising

For this study, advertising is the use of digital and traditional media to communicate a brand to increase sales (Saffer, 2020). Traditional media includes newspapers, radio, billboards, and television. Digital media includes social media, websites, and application software (apps).

1.8 Structure of paper

This study's report is structured into six chapters. These are outlined below:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1 introduces the study, its background, underlying problem as well as research objectives. In Chapter 1, the necessity of this study is also justified, and its delimitation is provided.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on youth and alcohol, social media advertising and the concepts relating to purchase intentions. The chapter presents the SII and SLT as its theoretical frameworks.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

In Chapter 3, the research methodology that was applied in conducting the study is defined and described. The chapter focuses on research philosophies, design, approaches, and methods used. Also covered are the sampling, data collection and analysis processes. The chapter ends with an ethical considerations section.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings

In Chapter 4 data analysis outputs and results are shown. In the chapter, reliability and validity, descriptive and hypothesis testing data are presented and explained.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In Chapter 5, the results presented in Chapter 4 are further discussed. This includes a comparison between these findings and those in the literature.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

In Chapter 6 the research is concluded. Important recommendations on addressing the problems highlighted in the research findings are also given.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review comprises three main sections: theoretical review, empirical review, and conceptual framework. The theoretical review identifies possible persuasive theories that result in influencing purchase intent. The empirical review with the support of literature identifies the research arguments both in contrast and in support of investigating the impact social media influencers and alcohol brands have amongst youth in increasing alcohol purchase intent. The conceptual framework encapsulates the focus of the study borrowing the lens from the theories identified in the theoretical review.

2.2 Theoretical Review of Literature

The theoretical foundation of the study to understand the characteristics of social media influencers is cemented using the source credibility model designed by Ohanian (1991). The source credibility model created a blueprint for the art of communication between sender and receiver, businesses continue to find it useful as a process to communicate to their targeted audience (Ezenwafor et al., 2021). Simply put, Ezenwafor et al. (2021) believes for a message to be effectively received and comprehended by the communicator, it should have a level of honesty, appeal, knowledge and match-up. The root of this combination agrees with the source credibility model by Ohinion (1991), therefore the credibility of the source may be described as the following three dimensions: trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness. Figure 2.1 below shows the source credibility model and product match-up components (Ohanian, 1990; Ezenwafor et al., 2021).

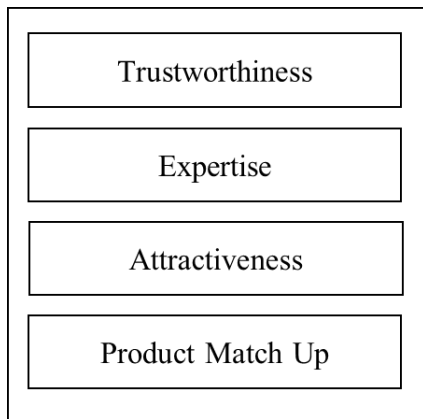


Figure 2.1: Source Credibility Model and Product Match-up (Ohanian, 1990; Ezenwafor et al., 2021)

It is generally recognised that an advertisement's influence is not solely dependent on the information in the advertisement but rather the additional appeal contained in the advertisement whether it be the use of humour or endorsers (Ott et al., 2016; Saima & Khan, 2020). The

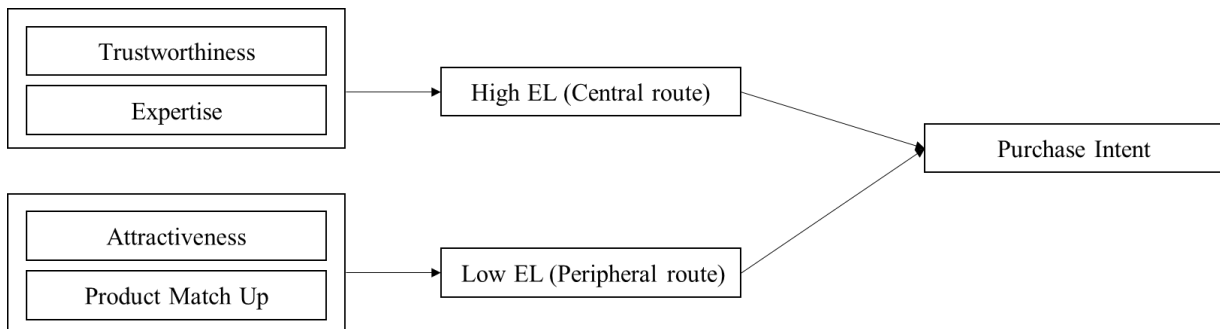


Figure 2.2: Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986)

Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) also known as the persuasion theory was developed to comprehend and assess the underlying processes that explain the connections between customers' reactions to advertisements and appeal tactics (Campbell, 2022). The creators of the ELM theory are Petty and Cacioppo (1986) who developed a framework that consisted of two routes of elaboration likelihood (EL), either high EL in which case it would be labelled central route and low EL labelled as a peripheral route. In the central route, a consumer evaluates the material or argument presented in light of how well it adheres to their beliefs and values whereas in the peripheral route, a consumer evaluates based on source cues without giving much thought (Masuda, Han, & Lee, 2022).

The attractiveness or credibility of the source message is a few examples of cues a consumer with low EL will be persuaded by (Campbell & Chung, 2022). However, characteristics that generally serve as peripheral signals can also encourage audience members to participate in the central route processing in cases where the public may only be mildly engaged in the topic

(Shao et al., 2019; Chang et al., 2020). Consumers who are just mildly interested in messages regarding drinking alcohol may thus be more likely to process them deeply if they contain a peripheral cue that they find stimulating, for example, a message starring a celebrity they enjoy (Olaosebikan, 2020) or in this case a social media influencer they like. Alcohol advertising attracts young people through the use of social media influencers as an additional motivator for the peripheral route to persuade followers to the final purchase intention (Campbell, 2022). For the youth, social media influencers become even more persuasive because they are more relatable, accessible and approachable (Berryman & Kavka, 2017). Similarly in other industries such as the cosmetic industry, previous SMI studies, that applied the ELM displayed results of conclusive findings that showed influencers were the biggest influence on consumer purchase intention (Phung & Qin, 2018; Saima & Khan, 2020).

Closely linked to the ELM theory is the Foote, Cone and Belding (FCB) Model in the advertising and marketing industry, which was developed by Richard Vaughn and consists of four quadrants that forecast trends in customer behaviour depending on the motive, the amount of engagement and kind of product (Vaughn, 1979). Based on consumer involvement and decision-making motives, the FCB model of four quadrants categorises product types and the reasons why people decide to buy them into two dimensions as outlined in Figure 3 below (Haley & Pittman, 2022). To properly target each quadrant, it also proposes various marketing and advertising tactics. According to Vaughn (1986), alcohol ads would fall into the low involvement category specifically in quadrant four labelled 'Satisfaction' quadrant. Further explained, products that fall under this category are ones that are acquired impulsively or for

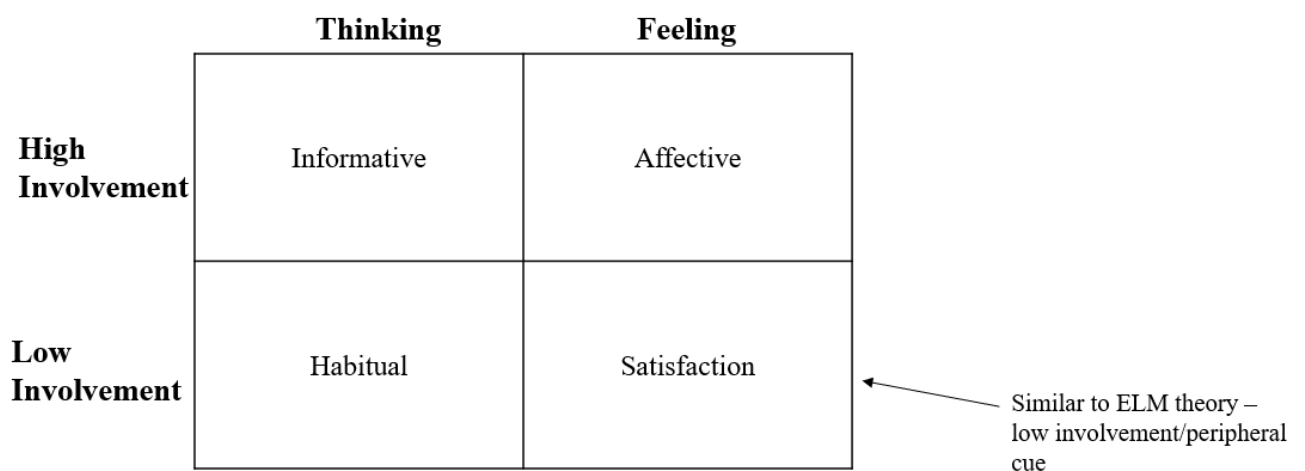


Figure 2.3: FCB Model (Vaughn, 1979)

one's pleasure and individual tastes. In the same light, the FCB model argues that consumers in the satisfaction quadrant are easily influenced by alcohol ads as low-involvement products.

Years later, Chaudhuri (1993) challenged this theory and believed alcohol should move to the high-involvement product due to the emotional attachment and attention it gets from people and therefore people's perceived value of alcohol increases. A more recent study by Campbell and Chung (2022) agreed with this notion of high involvement, suggesting currently consumers are currently provided with a variety of alcohol choices, variations, brands and flavours to examine and pick from given the frequent consumption of alcohol it is no longer an impulsive buy. The same study concluded the central route plays a critical role in influencing behavioural change for alcohol advertising (Campbell & Chung, 2022). Ultimately, it all points to involvement level and perhaps the most crucial aspect for consumers seeing advertisements (Tafesse, 2015; Eriksson et al., 2020).

It has, however, been established through the theoretical framework of the ELM that source credibility as one of the peripheral cues can persuade consumers' intentions in low-involvement environments (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Over the years, studies have either agreed or disagreed with the persuasion process from source credibility to be effective in low or high-involvement situations. Those in agreement with Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) Elaboration Likelihood Model (for example, Rhine and Severance, 1970; Mazursky and Schul, 1992). Those in disagreement believe it is in high-involvement situations and therefore a central cue in the ELM (for example, Kang & Herr, 2006; Yilmaz et al., 2011). The study of El Hedhli et al. (2021) inspired by Kang and Herr's literature (2006) disagrees with both and suggests that source (celebrity) credibility

simultaneously plays both central and peripheral routes in a persuasive messaging although setting dependent on purchase intent and product involvement. The study uses two key source characteristics ‘source internalisation’ and ‘source identification’ as the factors in the theoretical framework developed by Kelman (1961) to evaluate the persuasion process of source credibility in both central and peripheral routes, as outlined in Figure 2.4 below. Internalisation is the extent, persuasion and acceptance of the information is dependent on the expertise, trustworthiness and reliability of the source best used in high-involvement environments (El Hedhli et al., 2021). An alternative definition by Kapitan and Silvera (2016) is the act of incorporating beliefs, values and attitudes from a source into one’s belief system. Identification is the extent the recipient identifies through establishing similarities, or attractiveness with the source message best used in low-involvement environments (El Hedhli et al., 2021). Also simply defined as the degree to which people believe they have something in common with or are similar to a source (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016).

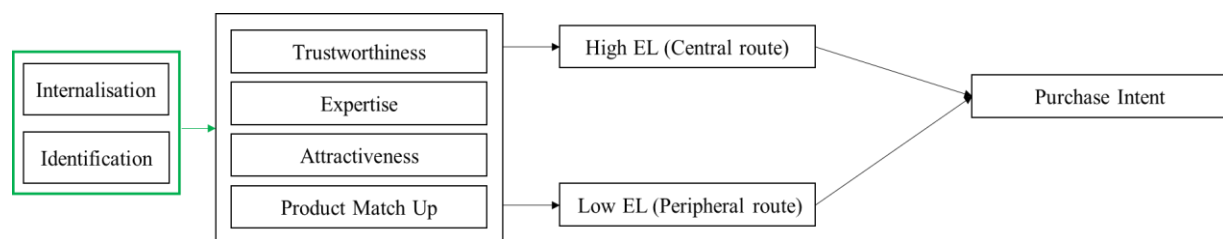


Figure 2.4: ELM theory combined with ‘source internalisation’ and ‘source identification’ theory (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Kelman, 1961)

Closely correlated to ELM theory and ‘source internalisation’ and ‘source identification’ theory, social learning theory poses that conduct can be taught through observation (Bandura & Walters, 1977; Hendriks et al., 2020). Similarly to ELM theory, consumers' appetite to observe and imitate through social learning theory, may be amplified based on the same characteristics that appeal to the peripheral cues established in ELM theory and source identification. The use of popular figures for alcohol advertising only enhances the desirability of young people wanting to imitate and see themselves as the characters and thereafter rapidly increases the chances of alcohol consumption (Aiken, et al., 2018). Through observation, the efficacy of social media influencers, for example, their attractiveness, credibility and relatability in supporting a brand is therefore said to have a significant impact on consumers’ intentions to buy a product (Kurdi, et al., 2022). Previous research has highlighted the significant alcohol-related content exposure in social media among young people and its ability to increase alcohol consumption (Curtis, et al., 2018; Hendriks et al., 2018; Hendriks et al.,

2020). Social learning theory with the help of marketing studies has proven the power of social media influencers to act as social agents that subsequently can change consumption behaviours and alter consumer attitudes and decision-making processes (Lu et al., 2018; Zafar et al., 2021). Based on the understanding of the theories mentioned above, provide substantial evidence of the role alcohol advertising has on the youth's attitudes and behaviour toward alcohol purchase intention (Campbell & Chung, 2022).

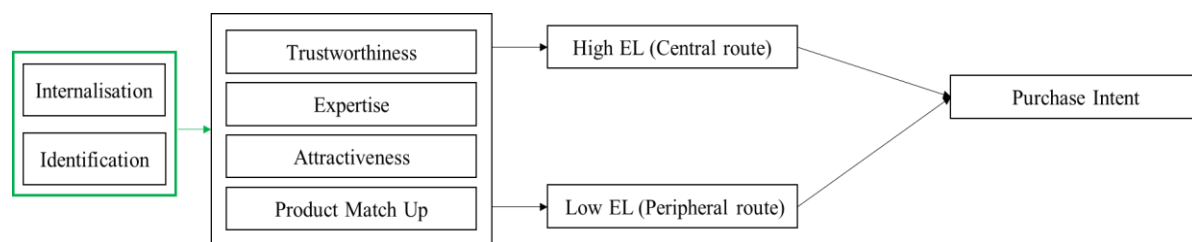


Figure 2.5: ELM theory combined with ‘source internalisation’ and ‘source identification’ and Social Learning theory (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Kelman, 1961; Bandura & Walters, 1977)

Figure 2.5 above represents a combination of ELM theory, ‘source internalisation’ and ‘source identification’ as well as the social learning theory.

2.3 Empirical Review of Literature

In this section empirical literature that relates to the study's research objectives is reviewed.

2.3.1 The evolution of alcohol advertising

According to Saffer (2020), advertising is the use of traditional and new media to build brand recognition and foster good associations with a brand to increase sales. Traditional media examples such as newspapers, radio, billboards, and television. New media examples such as digital and social media. The only difference in alcohol advertising is that it is alcohol-branded communication (Noel, Sammartino, & Rosenthal, 2020). Sauer (2019) suggests alcohol advertising dates to the year 50 AD, when alcohol engravings were used in locations like Pompeii, however, more prominent alcohol advertising could be seen in print throughout the Middle Ages, on fliers and subsequently in newspapers. It was not until newspapers, that a more advanced concept of advertising that many are familiar with now, began (Lodge, 2011). Sauer (2019) continues to add, that in the 1800s, alcohol could be aggressively marketed in print without providing facts like how much alcohol the beverage contains or instructions to drink responsibly, but instead was more directly aimed at the consumption of the consumer. The birth of radio and radio advertising commenced in the early 20th century, which not only could reach a wide audience but also capture their attention with a level of entertainment that

print could not offer (Gorman & McLean, 2009). Alcohol companies took advantage of the additional media platforms to advertise their products (Denig, 2016). The real disruptor was when television was made available and by then advertising was not a foreign concept so when it came to television advertising, it was able to attract a lot of attention (Adoma & Darko, 2020). The 20th century witnessed the dominance of traditional media from print to billboards followed by television, as key channels for alcohol advertising, however now one is more likely to see alcohol advertised on Instagram (Milliken, 2021).

The 21st century has seen a fast-paced evolution of how the world has become digitized since the internet was introduced in the 1990s (Johnson, 2023). As a result, people's media consumption and behaviour have shifted towards digital and social media. Advertising is about targeting a captive audience in the mediums they consume, so it is no surprise how so many alcohol brands are using digital and social media advertising to target youth (Noel, Sammartino, & Rosenthal, 2020). Alcohol ads communicated via traditional media have been found to frequently feature motifs that appeal to young people, including social success, a better mood, and an elevated sense of self-confidence because of drinking (Weaver & Lim, 2016). According to Campbell and Chung (2022), this is no different for digital and social media advertising, proposing an even more significant impact towards the youth due to the accessibility, appeal, and increased amount of exposure to alcohol advertising.

The use of alcohol brands on digital and social media is becoming increasingly popular, as part of alcohol companies' marketing tactics to target online users (Barry et al., 2018). This was even more apparent that despite the COVID-19 pandemic, there were still predictions of more advertising spend online, as a result of the increase in online usage (Ayush et al., 2020). Ayush et al. (2020) continue to express that the pandemic was an accelerator of the inevitable, of how consumers would consume media in the future. As a result, among the youth social media has transformed into an environment where alcohol use has become acceptable and glamorized (Hendriks et al., 2018).

2.3.2 Social Media as a Medium of Advertising for Alcohol

The alcohol industry has significantly reduced its advertising spending in conventional media sources such as television, billboards, and newspapers because of the growth of the internet and social media, while at the same time significantly increasing its spending for digital and online platforms (Barry et al., 2016). The rise in digital and technology adoption has birthed an era of social media, where people may engage, communicate, and share their lives (Wong

et al., 2021; Mason, Narcum, & Mason, 2021). Social media offers a platform for self-actualisation for society, and it is, therefore, revolutionising communication. In the end, social media significantly affects how people's social habits develop, particularly among the youth (Nurhandayani et al., 2019).

According to the SA Social Media Landscape 2022 report, the South African social media population has reached close to 30 million users, which is almost half of the country's population (Malinga, 2022). The report saw a direct correlation between the increase in social media users to the increase in internet penetration in the country. The improvement in internet access allows for more people to stay connected and entertained on social media. South African ranks 4th and spends just over 3 and a half hours on social media every day according to research looking at the top 10 countries with the most online screen time (Pillay, 2022). On Meta, the age group between 18 – 34 accounts for over 55% of the total platform users, with an almost even split between 18 – 24 and 25 – 34 (Galal, 2022). Since Facebook, now named Meta, is the biggest platform in South Africa, with 29.5 million users, these figures provide a fair idea of the age split for general social media use in South Africa. According to the Digital 2023 report, these are the most active social media platforms in South Africa; Meta, Instagram (owned by Meta), YouTube, TikTok, LinkedIn, Snapchat, and Twitter (Kemp, 2023).

For this study, the focus will be on Meta and Instagram due to their reach and popularity amongst South African youth (Shava & Chinyamurindi, 2018; Asmal, 2022). Particularly, Instagram is the most popular social platform amongst ages 18 – 24 years old. This age group is heavily reliant on social media since they were raised in the digital era, which allows them access to information and an opportunity to share their interests and ideas with the public (Nurhandayani et al., 2019).

Many businesses are concentrating on the use of influencer marketing to target young people because of the growth of social media (Ki & Kim, 2019; Boerman, 2020). Influencers on social media have proven to show favourable performance results for companies wanting to create awareness and return on investment (Foong & Yazdanifard, 2014; Herjanto et al., 2020).

2.3.3 The Use of Social Media Influencers for Alcohol Advertising

The concept of social media influencers is nothing new in advertising and media, as in the past, the use of celebrities was a well-known concept and tool used in traditional media known as celebrity endorsement (Erdogan, 1999; Nurhandayani et al., 2019; Schouten, Janssen, &

Verspaget, 2020). According to Ekşioğlu (2021), the key difference between traditional celebrities and influencers is that celebrities build their fame through their talent usually in the field of expertise such as fashion, sport, or film. As a result, celebrities garner a large following of diverse groups of people who admire and are fascinated by their talent. Influencers are ordinary people who gain a following through creating content and sharing their interests, opinions, and experiences in fields such as fashion, beauty, alcohol, etc (Lou & Yuan, 2019). As a result, influencers can exert influence over their following against attitudes towards brands and purchasing intent. A recent qualitative study conducted by Carels et al. (2022) on young adults between 18 - 25 years old, acknowledged the role of influential acts in encouraging alcohol consumption due to the glamourisation depicted in media and advertisements.

In the advertising industry, social media influencers are categorised by their status, influence and audience following to determine the commercial value for brands to invest (Gómez, 2019). Well-known classification terms practised by marketers and influencers regardless of the platform are nano, micro, mid-tier, macro and mega influencers (Bullock, 2018; Harshitha et al., 2021). It is important to highlight that depending on the source, the classification and category could change hence there are no official definitions but the popular industry-created terms (Gómez, 2019). Nano influencers are suggested to have a range between 1000 and 10,000 followers (Zozaya-Durazo & Sádaba-Chalezquer, 2022). Their limited and narrow reach based on the hierarchical scale may be modest, however, they tend to have the highest engagement with their followers through content watched, liked, commented and shared (Wibawa et al., 2021). While micro-influencers can range anywhere from 10,000 to 50,000 followers Wibawa et al. (2021), companies usually make use of these types of influencers because of their effectiveness in building trust and engagement with their followers. Another reason they are so influential is their ability to be authentic and accessible to their audience (Bernazzani, 2021).

The range and authenticity begin to widen at Mid-Tier influencers and up. Mid-tier influencers range from 50,000 to 500,000 followers and although they may be significantly higher than Micro-influencers, they have gradually built their trust with their followers through quality content creation (Harshitha et al., 2021). Macro Influencers range from 500,000 – 1 million followers, who tend to be well-known personalities leveraging their offline popularity into a lucrative business model of deriving additional income (Gómez, 2019). Macro influencers invest in professional content creation and carefully curate their content to attract multiple brand endorsements. On the other hand, mega influencers are celebrity-status individuals with

over 1 million followers (Sanders, 2023). They can compete with traditional mass channels with their reach and ability to grab the attention of their followers (Hou, 2019).

Jiménez-Castillo and Sánchez-Fernández (2019) regard social media influencers as micro-celebrities who exert the same characteristics as mainstream celebrities, just with a lesser following. Regardless of the lesser following, this has created an advantage over traditional celebrities because people view social media influencers as more trustworthy and approachable (Vrontis, Makrides, Christofi, & Thrassou, Social media influencer marketing: A systematic review, integrative framework and future research agenda, 2021).

2.3.4 Characteristics of Social Media Influencers

Inspired by Masuda et al. (2022) literature alongside former studies by Dalangin et al. (2021) and Nurhandayani et al. (2019), this literature has identified the source credibility model and product match-up as key characteristics of SMI. These characteristics form the basis to support the notion of the role SMIs play in driving purchase intention amongst their followers. Given the alcohol context provided thus far, this will provide critical evidence of why SMIs are effective in persuading youth to consume and purchase alcohol.

2.3.4.1 Influential Source: Credibility

According to Weismueller et al. (2020), source credibility is one of the most crucial elements in celebrity endorsements. Multiple studies have indicated the ability of credible sources to influence consumer attitudes and behaviour (Hovland et al., 1953; Sternthal et al., 1978; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). The term “source credibility” describes how the public views a source of information in relation to attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise on the recommended product (Ohanian, 1990). As real-life evidence of its importance, one study revealed the ability of Instagram influencers due to their perceived credibility to influence purchase behaviour among female users between the ages of 18 – 30 (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

The source credibility model explains the effectiveness of communication (Yoon, Kim, & Kim, 1998; Kurdi, et al., 2022). The model proposes multiple influential sources that impact purchase intent, brand attitudes and advertising perception (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018; Phua et al., 2018). The combination of all proposed perceived influential sources strengthens an endorser’s ability to influence purchase intentions (Schouten et al., 2020).

2.3.4.2 Influential Source: Attractiveness

The perceived attractiveness of the endorser can impact a consumer buying decision (Kurdi, et al., 2022). Traditional studies have highlighted source attractiveness as one of the key influencers of product and brand endorsement and purchase intention (Baker & Churchill Jr, 1977; Joseph, 1982). Baker and Churchill Jr (1977) believe physical attractiveness has a significant effect on the viewers' perception and willingness to buy. Joseph (1982) adds the audience is more likely to find attractive endorsers acceptable and regard their endorsement favourable and as useful. More recently, the physical attractiveness of social media influencers has been identified as closely correlated to an endorser's credibility (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Influencers on social media who are attractive can attract followers, which can lead to their followers developing a favourable opinion of the brand and eventually making a purchase (Dalangin et al., 2021). Hendriks et al. (2020) suggest celebrity attractiveness has more impact towards the youth compared to adults, as the youth are more gullible and may perceive the attractive endorser as trustworthy and knowledgeable. This was the case, in a study that revealed adolescents having a higher recall of alcohol advertising with celebrities compared to adults (Jernigan et al., 2017).

2.3.4.3 Influential Source: Trustworthiness

The second influential source based on the source credibility model is trustworthiness, which shows how much the audience believes the speaker is telling the truth and being honest (*Masuda, Han, & Lee, 2022*). The more trustworthy an endorser is, the more people perceive them as dependable and reliable (Ismagilova et al., 2020). According to Onu et al. (2019), source trustworthiness refers to the impartiality and accountability of an SMI. Trustworthiness includes an influencer's moral character, genuineness and acceptance by the target audience. The reason why SMIs are effective sources of influence is that people trust them more than traditional celebrities (Vrontis et al., 2021). Social media allows for two-way communication, therefore followers find SMIs approachable and engaging, increasing the likelihood of building trust (*Labrecque, 2014*). It is for this reason, that alcohol brands are using different types of influencers from Nano's to mega's to drive purchase intent. According to Dalangin et al. (2021), social media influencers' ability to be honest and relatable are powerful sources of persuasion to convince consumers to buy a product or not.

2.3.4.4 Influential Source: Expertise

The third recommended influential source based on the source credibility model is expertise, which is the extent to which the endorser is viewed as qualified and skilled in an area of interest to their audience (Hovland et al., 1953; Sternthal et al., 1978). In contrast, lack of knowledge can diminish influencers' perceived credibility (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). In some literature, expertise works hand in hand with trustworthiness (El Hedhli et al., 2021). In essence, source expertise adds to the credibility of the endorser and therefore the audience receiving the message can believe and trust the endorser and message. SMIs are seen as more knowledgeable if they promote goods or services related to their expertise, profession, or areas of interest (Ezenwafor et al., 2021). Expensive or complex goods due to the high involvement processing requirement, customers usually seek or accept expert advice as part of their purchasing behaviour (Campbell and Chung, 2022; Ohanian, 1990). In alcohol advertising, SMI may not be traditional experts, however, they may be perceived as experts of lifestyle that young people gravitate to. A study exposed how effective SMI alcohol-related posts appealed to adolescents because of the quality content, positive imagery and cool effect (Hendriks et al., 2020).

2.3.4.5 Product Match-up

Kamins (1990) identified as one of the pioneers of the study of endorser match-up theory, suggests that indeed endorsers are more effective in persuasion when there is endorser-product congruency. The extent to which endorser and product fit, the more it increases the chances of believing and trusting the recommendations (Nam & Dân, 2018). Therefore, influencers have an impact on consumers' purchase decisions (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020). Ezenwafor et al. (2021) believe SMIs are more effective in persuasion when positioned with the right product or service. This is the reason why alcohol brands are selective of the influencers used to promote their brands on their behalf because, with the wrong fit, this can be detrimental to driving positive attitudes and behaviours towards the alcoholic product and brand. A study conducted by Ju and Lou (2022) investigated followers' responses to influencer-product match-ups as an effective advertising mechanism. Results showed evidence that low product involvement needs stronger relationship ties between influencer and product as compared to high involvement products. According to Vaughn (1986), alcohol falls under low involvement. The greater the product-influencer match-up, the better the results such as purchase intent (Nam & Dân, 2018).

2.3.5 Purchase Intent

Within the marketing literature context, purchase intention has been described as a person's deliberate choice to try to acquire a product (Spears & Singh, 2004). Dadwal et al. (2020) further define purchase intent as the total of one's cognitive, emotional and behavioural tendencies toward using, adopting and paying for a certain product or service. Within social media influencer literature, there has been much emphasis on consumer attitude as a key trigger for purchase intention. (Mabkhot, Isa, & Mabkhot, 2022).

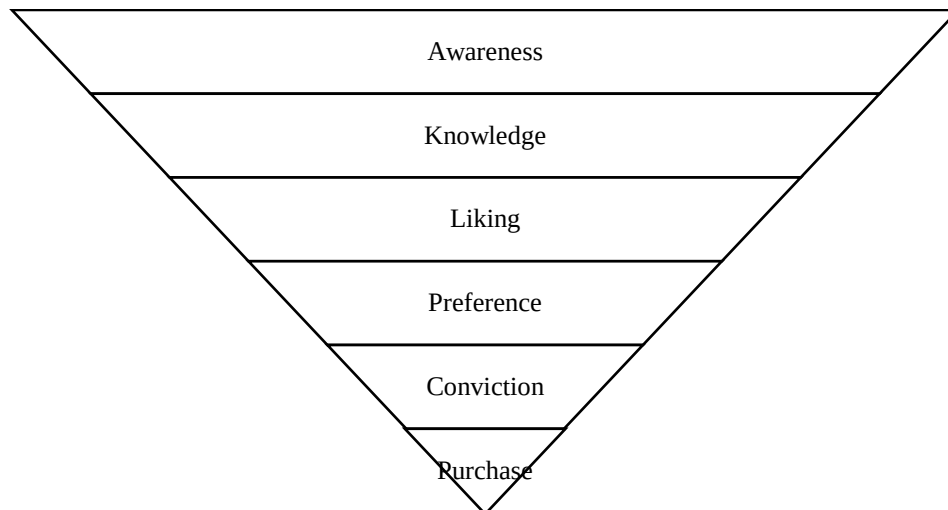


Figure 2.6: Purchasing Funnel (Huang & Lin, 2022)

According to Huang and Lin (2022), the purchasing funnel consists of six phases. Figure 2.6 defines the phased-down process by which customers acquire products, from the point at which customers are made aware to the point at which a purchase is made. (1) For the customer to know the product exists, there must be a level of awareness. (2) Knowledge thereafter gained through discovering what the product has to offer. (3) After gaining sufficient knowledge, customers begin to form an opinion and attitude towards the product. (4) Customers start changing their mindsets to the point where they favour one product over another. (5) Customers combine their preferences to want to buy and they come to believe that making the purchase is a good move. (6) Customers complete the transaction in the last phase, with a decision to purchase. Whilst Mixter (2019) suggests the current customer journey to the purchase is a little more complex and non-linear, each phase is not isolated and customers do not need to follow step by step to reach the final action of purchase. Mixter (2019) proposes advertisers develop more engaging content that drives two-way communication to grab customers' attention and evoke purchase intent. One of these tactics is the use of social media influencers and while the

consumer engages with alcohol advertisements through SMIs, it is during the liking and preference stage that the advert drives them into a purchase intention (conviction) phase.

2.3.6 Regulatory Impact on Alcohol Advertising

The current legislation around alcohol advertising standards in South Africa is The Liquor Act (Liquor Act, No. 59 of 2003, 2004), which solely prohibits alcohol advertising that targets minors and false or deceptive advertising (President of the Republic of South Africa, 2004). The Act provides further restrictions found in Appendix A, for all advertising, including digital and direct communication (Morapi & Altini, 2022):

- I. Advertising should be directed to persons above 18 years and older (Legal Drinking Age) and all communication and messaging across all mediums at the minimum should state ‘Not for persons under the age of 18’.
- II. Advertising should not entice nor encourage excessive, risky, or irresponsible alcohol consumption.
- III. Advertising should not peer pressure persons to drink or suggest inclusivity of social acceptance.
- IV. Advertising should display responsibly drink messaging in a clear and visible manner.
- V. Advertising should not persuade or encourage consumers a drink based on its alcohol content or effects thereof.
- VI. Advertising should not include pregnant women, nor associate alcohol to any health benefits.
- VII. Advertising should not encourage any violent or drug culture behaviour.

The alcohol industry in South Africa is self-regulated consisting of an alliance of most alcohol producers, distributors, and marketers through alcohol advertising codes of conduct in the absence of comprehensive alcohol advertising regulations (Bertscher, London, & Orgill, 2018). Parallel to this code is the Advertising Regulatory Board, which is an alliance of key stakeholders from the broader marketing and communications industry (ARB, 2023). The main purpose of the code is to promote responsible drinking, therefore ARB acts as an enforcer to protect the consumer and promote responsible, ethical, and honest advertising.

In 2020, the alcohol industry introduced further restrictions to the code stipulating no advertisements containing actors younger than 25 years old are allowed, furthermore, no high-

profile persons such as sports athletes, or celebrities are seen drinking an alcoholic beverage in the advertisement (Mitchell, 2020). Previous literature has shown skepticism of the adherence to the advertising codes as they are self-regulated which creates a level of ambiguity and opportunity for brands to toe the line (Aiken, et al., 2018). In the same literature, the study was based on 351 participants with 55% acknowledging models in the alcohol advertisements looked like they were younger than 25 years old. In the absence of comprehensive digital and social media alcohol advertising regulations, The Advertising Regulatory Board initiated a social media code of conduct for all advertising and marketing not just for the alcohol industry (ARB, 2022). Social Media influencers are obliged under the Code of Advertising Practice to disclose any partnership and involvement with a brand. All social media advertising should include easily recognizable identifiers whether it is inherited in the social media platform in the form of 'Promoted' or 'Sponsored' social posts on Twitter and Facebook, respectively. Alternatively, the identifiers should be included in the content either labelled as '#AD', '#Advertisement' or '#Sponsored'. This is to ensure consumers can easily distinguish between a paid or sponsored advertisement. 33.3% of alcohol-branded influencer posts were acknowledged with a form of disclosure that indicated the content was an advertisement or paid partnership, in a study exploring the frequency of alcohol posts on Instagram by influencers (Hendriks et al., 2020).

The current regulatory framework demonstrates potential flaws in the legislation that are not always fulfilling the codes' intended goal of ensuring responsible alcohol advertising. Alcohol ads are targeting the youth and the use of SMIs who identify and trust these endorsers, only raises more concerns about alcohol consumption amongst the youth.

2.3.7 Youth exposure to alcohol advertising

According to Paing (2019), consumers are using the Internet more frequently than any other form of communication. The typical adult consumes more than 20 hours per week online, compared to more than 27 hours per week that young people between the ages of 16 and 24 spend online. As a result, this provides the youth with greater potential to be exposed to alcohol advertising compared to adults (Jernigan et al., 2017). A pilot survey conducted in 2013 by Jernigan et al. (2017) compared adolescents (13 to 20 years old) and young adults (+21 years old) as well as media types (traditional and digital) to recall alcohol advertising over a previous 30-day period. Both age groups shared similar sentiments regarding the amount of alcohol exposure across traditional media, however, the wider differences came from a higher recall of

digital and social media influencer alcohol content between adolescents versus young adults (36.1% vs 20.8%), respectively.

A more recent study by Hendriks et al. (2020) explored to what extent the exposure of alcohol posts among social media influencers on Instagram to young adults between the ages of 18 – 25 years old. Among the influencers examined, 63.5% shared at least one alcohol-related post with the majority of the posts coming from lifestyle influencers. This is in direct correlation with another study emphasizing the light nature of how alcohol posts are being portrayed on social media with positivity and enjoyment (Hendriks et al., 2018). Interestingly, only 19.5% of the posts had a vivid and clear image of an alcohol brand with fewer disclosing any signs of a paid partnership or regulatory requirements of a minimum inclusion of no underage drinking sign (Hendriks et al., 2020). Alcohol advertising is attracting young people due to its appeal and therefore has a bigger impact on youth alcohol consumption (Aiken, et al., 2018).

The South African youth have demonstrated signs of alcohol use from as early as 13 years old, some studies have estimated 32% of adolescents between 11 – 20 years old to be drinking alcohol (Reddy et al., 2013; Reddy, et al., 2017). More recently a few more studies have demonstrated the concern about high school students' involvement in alcohol consumption, with data suggesting a range between 22% - 69% of students drinking alcohol (Van der Heever et al., 2015; Maserumule, Skaal, & Sithole, 2019; Mohale & Mokwena, 2020; Mathibe, Cele, & Modjadji, 2022). The use of popular figures for alcohol advertising only enhances the desirability of young people wanting to imitate and see themselves as the characters and thereafter rapidly increases the chances of alcohol consumption (Aiken, et al., 2018). South African youth between the ages of 18 – 25 have been highlighted as most vulnerable to risky behaviour because of alcohol consumption (SACENDU, 2019). In a study in the UK and Ireland for young adults post-high school, the majority of students 18 years older, raised concern about the increased levels of alcohol consumption amongst young adults with at least two-thirds of students demonstrating a hazardous alcohol consumption score (Davoren, Demant, Shiely, & Perry, 2016). It is therefore in this light that this study will focus on the ages of 18 and 25 to investigate the role social media influencers play in alcohol advertising, subsequently purchase intent and alcohol consumption, as this age group is proven to be the one that is most vulnerable to consumption of social media ads through social media influencers resulting in the relatability of such content and hence the use and abuse of alcohol.

It has become more challenging for businesses to draw in and influence consumers as a result of consumers' rising mistrust of traditional marketing (Leung et al., 2022). Alcohol brands are resorting to social media and social media influencers to target the youth as that has proven to have greater influence and appeal.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

Inspired by Figure 2.5 given the identified synergies amongst the theories illustrated anchored with the characteristics of SMIs, this research seeks to use and simplify them as outlined in Figure 2.7 as the appropriate lens to analyze and answer the research objectives. Important to mention the three dimensions of source credibility will be measured separately however in theory is understood as an element of source credibility.

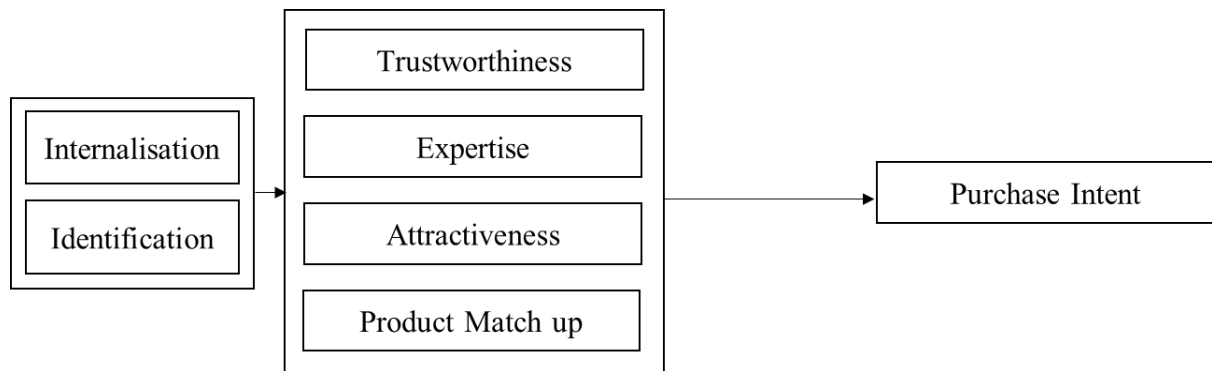


Figure 2.7: Conceptual Model

2.4.1 Hypotheses Development

Several hypotheses were developed from the above framework. These are presented below.

Internalisation and Identification and SM Influencer Characteristics

The degree to which a customer believes that an influencer's persuasive message is authentic determines how well that message is internalised (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016). The intended impact of the message will be realised when the customer regards the source as trustworthy (Erdogan, 1999). Consumers can identify with social media influencers because they feel they are more like them and therefore, able to believe them (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020). Hence, the following hypothesis:

H1: Internalisation and Identification will positively influence SM Influencer trustworthiness in SM alcohol ads.

The more closely related or matched the SM influencer is with the endorsed product, the greater the perceived expertise the endorser creates in the minds of the consumers. The greater the perceived expertise, the deeper consumers internalise the endorsement message as more credible and therefore increase chances of being persuaded (Choi & Rifon, 2012). The popularity of followers for SMIs is due to the perceived expertise particular topic that mirrors the followers' interest. If a consumer's interests, desires, or goals are reflected in an influencer's material, they are more inclined to identify with that expert knowledge (Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2017). Hence, the following hypothesis:

H2: Internalisation and Identification will positively influence SM Influencer expertise in SM alcohol ads.

Source attractiveness will typically be skewed towards the identification dimension given its peripheral cues defined in Kelman's (1961) framework. According to Hedhli et al. (2020) within the theoretical concepts of internalisation and identification, source attractiveness is in a unique position to fit within either concept whether connected to or unrelated to the marketed product. Further explains, identification is more apparent and relied upon when a customer is more attracted to the source than the marketed product and therefore no relation between the product and endorser is needed. The opposite could be said when the marketed product is more closely aligned to the attractive source, customer internalises their attitudes towards the source as a key component to the persuasion process. Hence, the following hypothesis:

H3: Internalisation and Identification will positively influence SM Influencer attractiveness in SM alcohol ads.

Social media influencers range from peers to celebrities; therefore, it is easy for youth to relate. (Hou, 2019) suggests the perceived unique association with SM influencers is due to influencers' ability to be relatable. This relatability has morphed into a desire for youth to imitate and identify themselves as the SM influencers they see on social media (Hendriks et al., 2018). A study conducted by (Mundel & Yang, 2022) demonstrated the impact of using Hispanic endorsers in unhealthy product (such as alcohol) social media advertisements in the United States. Results led to a positive attitude towards the endorsers and unhealthy products such as alcohol because Hispanic customers identified with endorsers. Hence, the following hypothesis:

H4: Internalisation and Identification will positively influence SM Influencer product match-up in SM alcohol ads.

Sub-heading: ***SM Influencer Characteristics and Purchase Intention***

According to Lisichkova & Othman (2017) perceived source trustworthiness in addition to expertise influencers buying decisions. Customers view SM influencers as more trustworthy and approachable as compared to traditional celebrities (Vrontis et al., 2021; Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020). Therefore, according to Djaraforava and Rushworth (2017), SM influencers are more successful in influencing purchase intent. Alcohol brands use SMIs because of their ability to persuade and change attitudes towards purchasing their products. Hence, the following hypothesis:

H5: SM Influencers' trustworthiness in SM alcohol ads positively affects purchase intention.

SM influencers are typically known for their knowledge-sharing and expertise around a particular subject matter (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Previous literature has argued that a source's perceived expertise is just enough to influence the customer buying process (Naumanen, 2017; Ohanian, 1990). The perceived expertise results in followers' trust and therefore consumers believe in that trust when SMIs endorse alcohol brands. Hence, the following hypothesis:

H6: SM Influencers' expertise in SM alcohol ads positively affects purchase intention.

Van der Walldt et al. (2009) stated a consumer's readiness to purchase can easily be influenced just because the source is attractive. Similarly, Kurdi et al. (2022) agree mentioning the perceived attractiveness of the endorser can influence consumers' purchase intention. Influencers on social media who are attractive can attract followers, which can lead to their followers developing a favourable opinion of the brand and eventually making a purchase (Dalangin et al., 2021). Due to the appeal of alcohol advertising and the endorsers in them, increases the chances of purchase intention (Aiken, et al., 2018) Hence, the following hypothesis:

H7: SM Influencers' attractiveness in SM alcohol ads positively affects purchase intention.

The efficacy of an endorsement depends on how well it complements the product (Wright, 2016). According to Mundel and Yang (2022) the greater the perceived endorser product match-up, the more favourable the chances of the endorser affecting purchase intention. This was evident in their study of unhealthy products such as alcohol. Hence, the following hypothesis:

H8: SM Influencers' product match-up in SM alcohol ads positively affects purchase intention.

The last hypothesis drawn from the models and the literature is that Influencers' product match-up in SM alcohol ads positively affects purchase intention. This broadly answers the study's key concern as captured in the research topic.

2.5 Conclusion

The literature review explored the Source Credibility Model and the Elaboration Likelihood Model to understand how social media influencers and alcohol brands affect youth's purchase intent. A conceptual framework was created to integrate these theories to analyse the role of social media influencers in shaping youth's alcohol purchase intentions. The conceptual model supports eight hypotheses that were also discussed in the chapter. In the empirical literature, it emerged that social media influencers are reshaping alcohol advertising due to their relatability and engagement levels. Characteristics like credibility, attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise influence their effectiveness in influencing purchase intent. However, concerns arise regarding youth exposure to alcohol advertising through social media, highlighting the need for stricter regulation in this area. The next chapter discusses the research methodology that was applied in investigating this study further.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the research methodology, the techniques employed for data collection and analysis, as well as the rationale behind the selection of methods utilised. The difference between research methodology and methods is that methodology is a step in the research process motivated by a research strategy with goals to meet the research objectives (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Whereas, methods, are techniques in data analysis and collection identified in the methodology process (Igwenagu, 2016). For this study, the methodology process followed the research onion created by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, (2019). The layers represented begin with rooting the study with a philosophical position, research approach, design and strategy to eventually methods required for data collection and analysis.

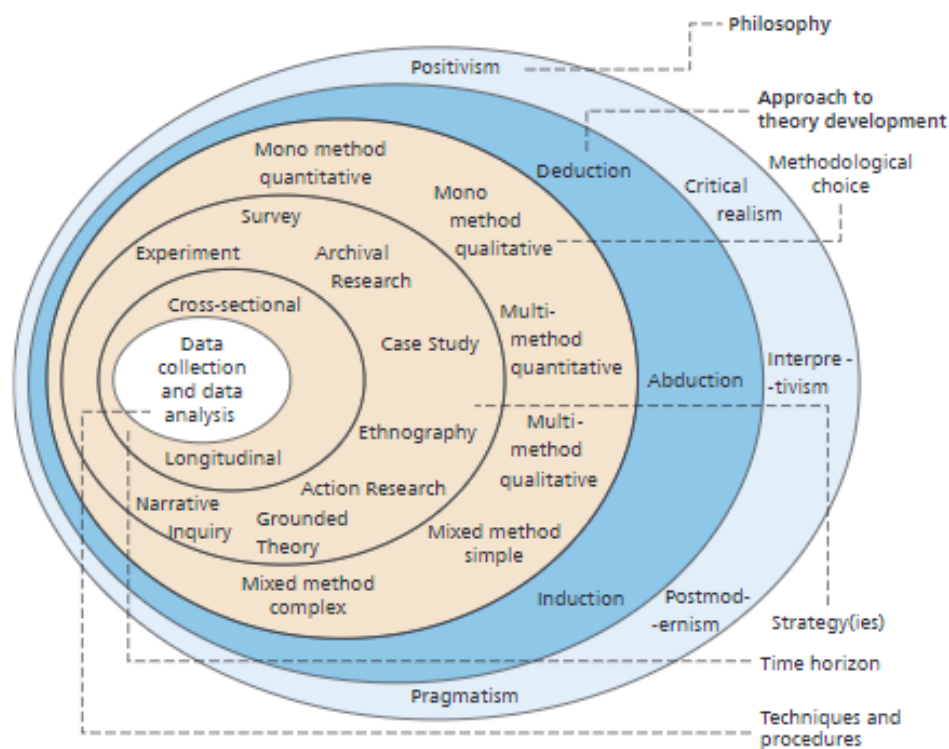


Figure 3.1: Research Onion (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019)

3.2 Research Philosophy

According to Saunders et al., (2019:130), research philosophy refers to “a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge”. Understanding these beliefs and assumptions is important as it shapes the rest of the methodological chapter from the research approach to the design and techniques used for data analysis and collection (Scotland, 2012).

In the research onion, there are five key philosophies however according to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) most popular among researchers are interpretivist and positivist philosophies. Positivist philosophy is rooted in natural science and is only concerned with the absolute truth of knowledge based on what is observed as reality (Saunders et al., 2019). It is objectively minded, collecting data, and drawing findings based on facts to inform a generality view. Interpretivist philosophy believes people are complex human beings and should be treated as such (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). It is subjectively minded, collecting insightful qualitative data, and drawing insights through methods that provide context and perspective about certain topics (Thanh & Thanh, 2015).

This study applied a positivist philosophy. The study aimed to draw conclusive findings that there is a relationship between alcohol advertising through SMIs and purchase intent amongst the youth in South Africa. This required a quantitative measure provided by a study sample that allowed the research to generalise its findings to the youth population in South Africa. This demanded positivism as it is based on measurable outcomes from statistics (Saunders et al., 2019). Given the sensitivity around alcohol consumption in South Africa and the constant blame game between the alcohol industry and the government, quantifiable data provides an objective perspective and allows the data to speak for itself.

3.3 Research Approach

According to Saunders et al. (2019), there are three approaches used in research. These are the inductive, deductive, and abductive approaches. Each approach is typically associated with a philosophy. For example, the inductive approach tends to follow an interpretive paradigm and the deductive a positivist. The inductive approach also known as grounded theory, is the development of a hypothesis or conceptual framework based on analysing trends and patterns in a body of data (Hair et al., 2019). Similarly, the method of qualitative research draws on the same thinking. The deductive approach analytical in nature, begins with the conceptual framework and hypothesis from known theories and thereafter draws conclusions based on the data collected and analysed (Siswono et al., 2020). Therefore, quantitative research will be more inclined to deductive reasoning because facts can be measured (Hair et al., 2019). The abductive approach is a combination of both inductive and deductive reasoning, which usually starts with an interesting observation or fact and ends with a theoretical and/or empirical contribution (Saunders et al., 2019). This study applied a deductive approach consistent with the philosophical stance of positivism and the natural association with quantitative research (Saunders et al., 2019). This empowered it to test the applicability of existing theories

specifically the ELM and the SII on how SMI influenced the South African youth's alcohol purchase intentions.

3.4 Methodological choice

The methodological choice is the first layer within the research design process that guides the route the researcher will take to answer the research questions. As per the research onion (Figure 3.1), available methodological choices are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Thereafter it can be decided if a single data collection technique (mono-method) or two or more data collection techniques (multi-method) (Saunders et al., 2019). According to Rahi (2017) quantitative and qualitative are the most popular methods amongst research. The quantitative method disregards a person's sentiments as well as the context of the surroundings and instead concentrates on gathering new data from a population in with the problem (Rahi, 2017). The method is scientific, inspired by positivist philosophy and produces numerical and statistical data (McNabb, 2020; Grinnell Jr. & Unrau, 2010). The qualitative method is interested in developing deeper insights into a topic to eventually create a theory (Rahi, 2017). It is commonly linked to interpretivism philosophy and instead of interpreting numerical data, it will be words and images (Saunders et al., 2019).

This study used the quantitative method while applying a single data collection technique (mono-method) in the form of a self-administered questionnaire. The quantitative method was the most suitable method to use due to its ability to collect data from a large population to derive meaning to answer the research objectives. It also supported the collection of standardized data that can be used to test hypotheses of interest.

3.5 Research Strategy

Saunders et al. (2019) advise first and foremost the selection of research strategy should be determined by the research questions and the ability of the strategy to answer them. The research strategy is a procedure for gathering and analysing data with specific goals (Rahi, 2017). Specific goals intend to find answers for the research objectives. A researcher is presented with a few research strategies to execute to find, collect and analyze data. The study therefore used the survey strategy in the form of a self-administered questionnaire. The advantage of a survey for this study was its ability to sample a large population effectively and efficiently. The decision behind a survey strategy is consistent and associated with the research methodological chapter from the selections of the positivist philosophy, deductive reasoning, and quantitative design method.

3.6 Research Design

According to Nunan et al. (2020), research design is a strategy for carrying out a study. Further describes the steps needed to get the data required to formulate or address research issues. The specifics and useful elements of putting that strategy into practice are specified by the research design.

Exploratory research is a useful tool for posing open questions to learn more and build an understanding of a particular subject or phenomenon a researcher is interested in (Saunders et al., 2019). The purpose of exploratory studies is to discover richer and deeper insights where the researcher is not confident of the existing information or the topic has not been investigated (Nunan et al., 2020). As a researcher in exploratory research, one must be comfortable and creative to change techniques throughout the research process as more information enlightens the research (Elman et al., 2020). Therefore, this type of research cannot be explored quantitatively however a researcher once satisfied with the insights received from the exploratory research may test their hypothesis through a conclusive research approach (Elman et al., 2020). For exploratory studies to be effective, they use qualitative approaches of smaller groups of people and less structured and formal (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019).

This study used a conclusive research design. Conclusive research's purpose is to present unambiguous and conclusive outcomes and relationships based on a hypothesis or set of hypotheses (Nunan et al., 2020). Within a conclusive research design, a researcher has the option of a descriptive or causal research design (Hair et al., 2019). Descriptive research aims to collect correct information that describes the state of variables of interest (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019). Causal research, also known as explanatory research, tests the cause-and-effect relationship among variables (Saunders et al., 2019). The latter applied to the study as its research objectives predominantly involved the testing of relationships among model variables.

According to Nunan et al. (2019) a researcher has the option of cross-sectional designs and longitudinal designs. The difference between the two is that cross-sectional design involves collecting data from the population or sample group at one time versus longitudinal where data is collected from the same population or sample more than once or over a period (Saunders et al., 2019). Saunders et al. (2019) suggest many academic researchers lean towards cross-sectional because of academic requirements (time constraints). This study was conducted using a cross-sectional design given time constraints.

3.7 Population and Sampling

The term ‘population’ in research refers to all the individuals, elements, or objects that a researcher seeks to understand, whereas ‘sample’ refers to the process of choosing a subset of the population for the study (Rahi, 2017). Malhotra (2019) insists that a population can be defined in four dimensions: elements or individuals participating, sampling units, geographical constraints, and time constraints. Under these considerations, the target population for the study could be described as South African youth aged between 18 and 25 years, with internet access and active on social media.

Saunders et al. (2019) suggest for any statistical conclusions about a population from sample data to be drawn, the sample must be significantly sufficient to leave room for a reasonable margin of error.

The study applied a non-probability convenience sampling. Non-probability sampling is a technique where there is little to no confirmation that every unit (individual) will be selected to take part in the research (Rahi, 2019). Some researchers challenge its representativeness of the population although one may still generalize findings from a non-probability sample on statistical grounds (Saunders et al., 2019). Convenience sampling as one of the techniques of non-probability sampling is the process of collecting data from participants who are in proximity and reachable for the researcher. The advantages of this sampling and technique are the time and cost convenience for the researcher. Given the large size of the population of interest, sampling was a cost, time-efficient method for including research respondents (Turner, 2020).

In contrast to non-probability sampling, probability sampling ensures that every unit (individual) is known and has an equal chance of being selected (Malhotra, 2019). Due to limited time and access, accessing the target population directly was deemed impossible. Therefore, convenience sampling was utilised to focus on accessing databases of South African universities and colleges, considering that these institutions represent a significant portion of this age group.

Figure 3.2 demonstrates a considerable size of students in tertiary between 18 – 24 years old. This accumulates to over 2 million South African students.

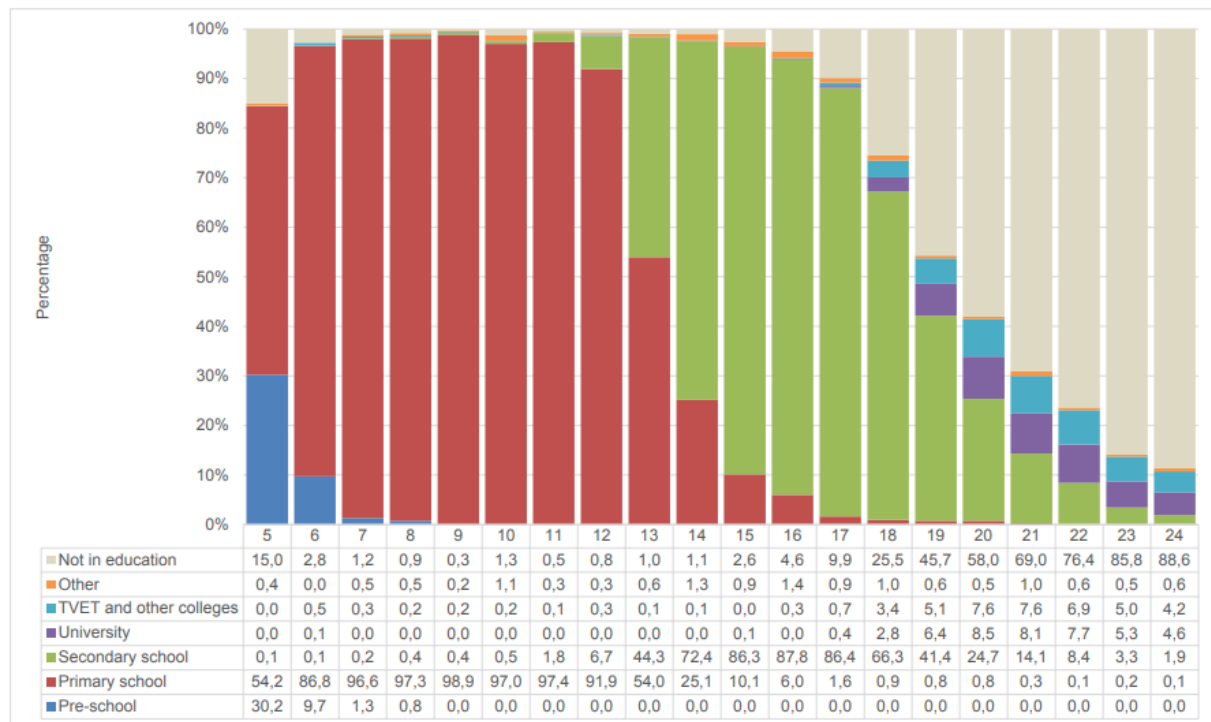


Figure 3.2: Percentage of youths in South Africa in various educational facilities (South African Market Insights, 2019)

The researcher targeted tertiary institutions such as universities and colleges around Johannesburg where there was a high probability and concentration of the target population.

3.7.1 Determining Sample Size

Choosing the right sample size is very important because it has a significant impact on statistical methods (Rahi, 2019). According to McDaniel and Gates (2018), the sample size is determined by a variety of variables, including the fundamental characteristics of the population being investigated, statistical criteria, sample sizes used in earlier research projects, the changes considered and the predicted dependability and accuracy of the results. Dalangin et al., (2021) suggest typically 200 completed questionnaires is an acceptable amount in research as it reduces errors and makes the data more reliable. The researcher targeted a minimum of 200 respondents in line with Dalagin et al. (2021).

3.7.2 Research Instrument

Business research encompasses two primary sources of data - primary and secondary (Dalati & Marx Gómez, 2018). Primary data served as the foundation for collecting information to determine the purchase intention of social media influencers endorsing alcohol advertising among young people. Since the study employed deductive reasoning techniques, the survey

strategy adopted stems from quantitative research approaches (Saunders et al., 2019). To enable generalisation and the collection of extensive data regarding the study's target population, self-administered questionnaires will be employed as the primary data collection method. These questionnaires were developed and designed using Qualtrics, a widely-used online survey software utilised by numerous businesses and academic institutions.

3.7.3 Measurement

The study used a structured questionnaire that consisted of only closed questions. In terms of measurement, most of the questionnaire used the 5-point Likert Scale to measure participants' attitudes towards the questions. The 5-point Likert Scale, as the number suggests has five response variables a participant may select from. Organised in the manner where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Disagree. Since the Likert answer format scale is regarded as reliable and makes for efficient data gathering, its usage in this study is regarded as sufficient (Malhotra, 2019). Additionally, the format is easy for participants to use and comprehend.

The questionnaire was broken down into four sections. Section A consisted of demographic, social media activity as well as types of alcohol consumed questions. The age question was a qualifying question. For participants to complete the questionnaire, they needed to be within the 18 to 25-year age group.

Section B questions compared respondents' reactions to a brand before and after viewing an ad image featuring an SMI advertising the brand. This was intended to measure the ads' direct effect on the viewers' purchase intention. Purchase intent questions were adapted from the works of Ohanian (1990) and Ha and Lam (2017).

For section C questions and statements, the study adopted the source credibility scale created by Ohanian (1990) as a base to form the structure of the questions of social media influencers (Özbölük & Akdoğan, 2022; Ezenwafor et al., 2021; Hussain & Ali, 2022). The additional product match-up dimension of SMI characteristics was inspired and adapted from Ha & Lam (2017).

Section D focused on the participants' ability to internalise and identify with SMIs. The questions are created by the author given there was no previous literature to reference using Kelman's (1976) theory against SMI characteristics.

3.7.4 Data Collection Method

An online survey questionnaire was freely circulated for completion by participants meeting the set age criteria. Email and WhatsApp were the main methods of circulation. Participants received a link, opened it, and completed the questionnaire. The respondents were encouraged to further circulate the link to all those who met the set age criteria and so on. Tertiary institutions were a feasible choice because most participants have access to the internet provided by the institution and are active on social media. The study utilized university colleagues and immediate social circles to identify participants and share the links containing the questionnaire.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

According to Saunders et al. (2019) as far as ethical considerations for survey questionnaires are concerned, researchers need to ensure the confidentiality of the respondents' responses, voluntary participation, and informed consent from the respondents. It is the responsibility of researchers to respect the research process and make sure all ethical concerns are considered.

The following ethical considerations factored throughout the research process:

- Participants were made aware of the aim and purpose of the research through the Participant Information sheet provided before the questionnaire commenced.
- Participants were assured of their confidentiality; the researcher did not disclose the data provided by the participants.
- Participants were assured of their anonymity; the researcher had no view of personal information of participants. Data was stored and handled according to data privacy laws.
- Data were only used for research purposes aimed to complete the research study.
- Participants could, at any moment, decide to no longer participate in the questionnaire with no undue consequences for them. The questionnaire was entirely voluntary.

The study could not commence without ethical clearance from the Wits Business School Research Ethics Committee. The ethical clearance further ensured that ethical matters that could affect the study's integrity were duly addressed.

3.9 Conclusion

The chapter outlined the research methodology, including data collection and analysis techniques, as well as the rationale behind their selection. It distinguished between research methodology and methods, emphasising the methodology's role in guiding research objectives

and the methods' practical implementation. Following Saunders et al.'s research onion model, the study adopted a positivist philosophy and deductive approach, using a quantitative mono-method of self-administered questionnaires. A survey strategy was used with a conclusive research design. Convenience sampling targeted South African tertiary institutions, aiming for a minimum of 200 respondents. Data was collected online and analysed using IBM SPSS version 28. Ethical considerations ensured participant confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, and informed consent, with clearance from the Wits Business School Research Ethics Committee. The next chapter presents the findings that were made in the study.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study's results. The results presented in this chapter were derived from the data collected via the self-administered online questionnaire created and distributed using the Qualtrics software tool. Many of the respondents came from the Witwatersrand University email database. Others were recruited through questionnaire distribution to colleagues who were further encouraged to share the questionnaire with others.

This chapter follows five sections. The first section pays attention to the first four questions of the survey which includes the respondents' demographic profiles of gender and age as well as the use of social media activity specifically Facebook and Instagram and the types of alcohol consumed. The findings of the survey sample are presented using descriptive data analysis in the form of pie charts and bar graphs.

The second section assesses the reliability and validity of the data used in the analysis. The third section addresses the first four hypotheses which look at whether internalisation as well as identification can positively influence social media trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, as well as product match-up with respect to alcohol ads. Fourth section of this chapter, analyses if there are significant differences with respect to how people perceive brand and influencer ads. Finally, the fifth section evaluates whether the same factors influence purchase intention and whether this intention is higher for social media ads that feature influencers. The researcher then summarises the findings which will then be used for the discussion in the following chapter.

4.2 Descriptive statistics

This section shows the findings from the descriptive statistical analysis conducted on IBM SPSS. A total of 346 respondents' views are captured in the data. The findings are presented using pie charts and bar graphs.

4.2.1 Gender of respondents

Figure 4.1 below shows the respondents' distribution by gender. This is out of a total of 346.

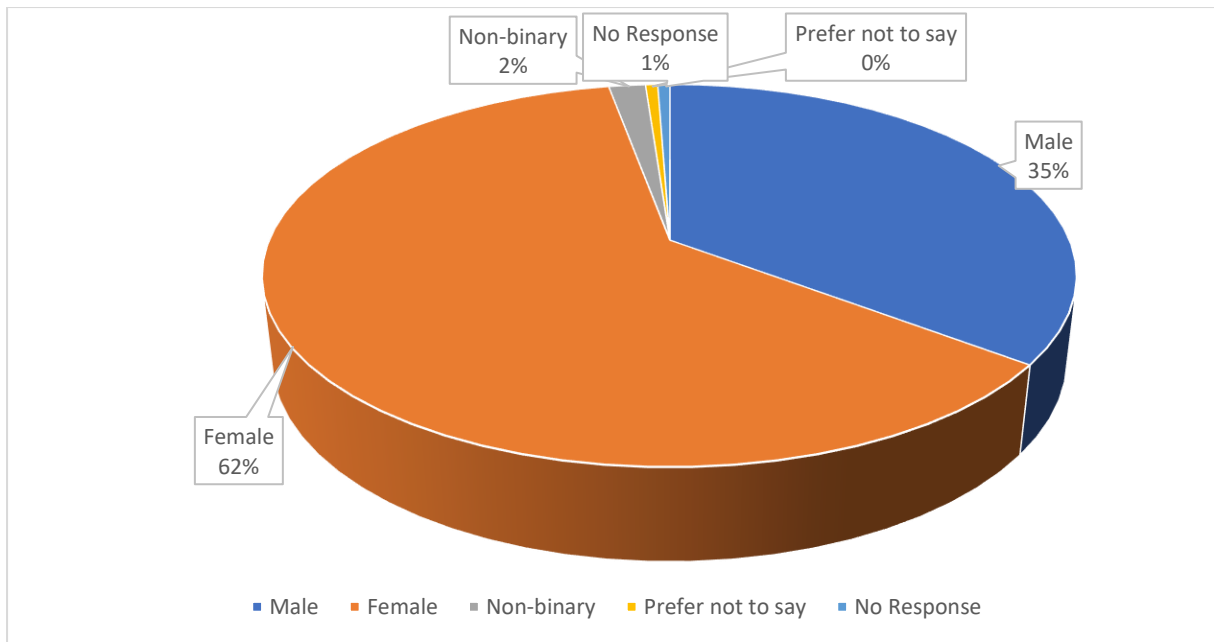


Figure 4.1: Respondents by gender

The results show that of the total 346 respondents, 122 (35.50%) were male, 214 (62.20%) were female, 6 (1.70%) identified as non-binary, 2 (0.60%) preferred not to say and 2 (0.60%) did not complete the question. According to these findings, more female respondents than male respondents participated in this study.

4.2.2 Age of respondents

Figure 4.2 below illustrates the age distribution from the survey sample.

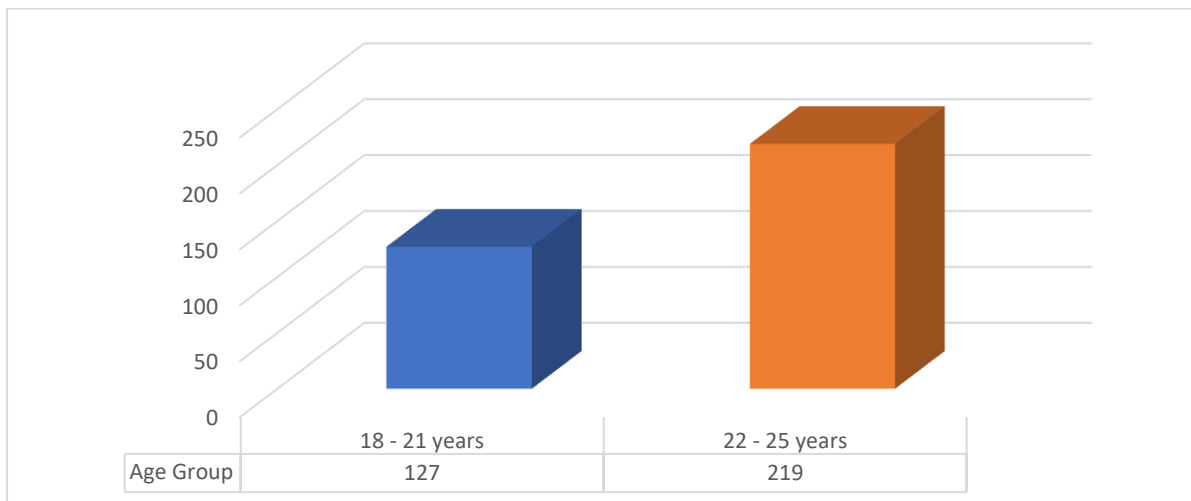


Figure 4.2: Respondents by age

The results show that out of a total of 346 respondents who were eligible to participate, 127 (36.7%) of the respondents were between the ages of 18 – 21 years and 219 (63.3%) of the

respondents were between the ages of 22 and 25 years. According to these findings, more respondents aged 22 – 25 years participated than those between 18 – 21 years.

4.2.3 Social media usage

Respondents were requested to indicate if they had regularly used either Facebook or Instagram over the 30 days preceding the survey. The results are summarised in Figure 4.3 below.

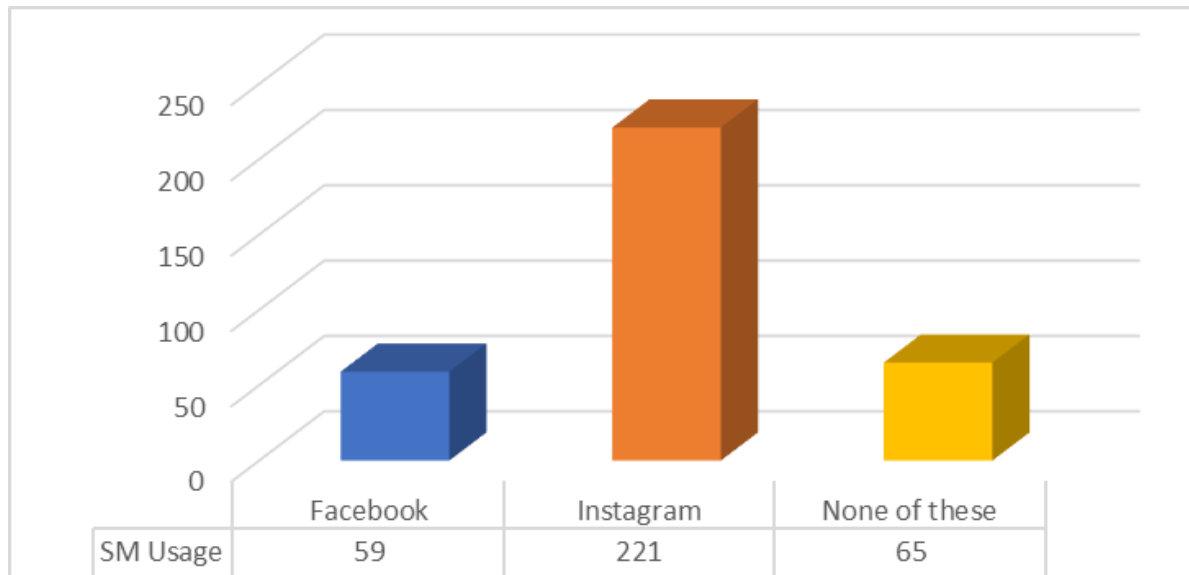


Figure 4.3: Social media use

Many of the respondents, 221 (64.06%) used Instagram regularly over the 30 days compared to Facebook, 59 (17.10%). Also, 65 (18.84%) respondents indicated they had not used any of the listed social media platforms over the 30 days preceding their participation in the survey.

4.2.4 Alcohol Consumptions (Types)

Respondents were requested to indicate their most consumed type of alcohol over the 30 days preceding the survey. The results are summarised in Figure 4.4 below.

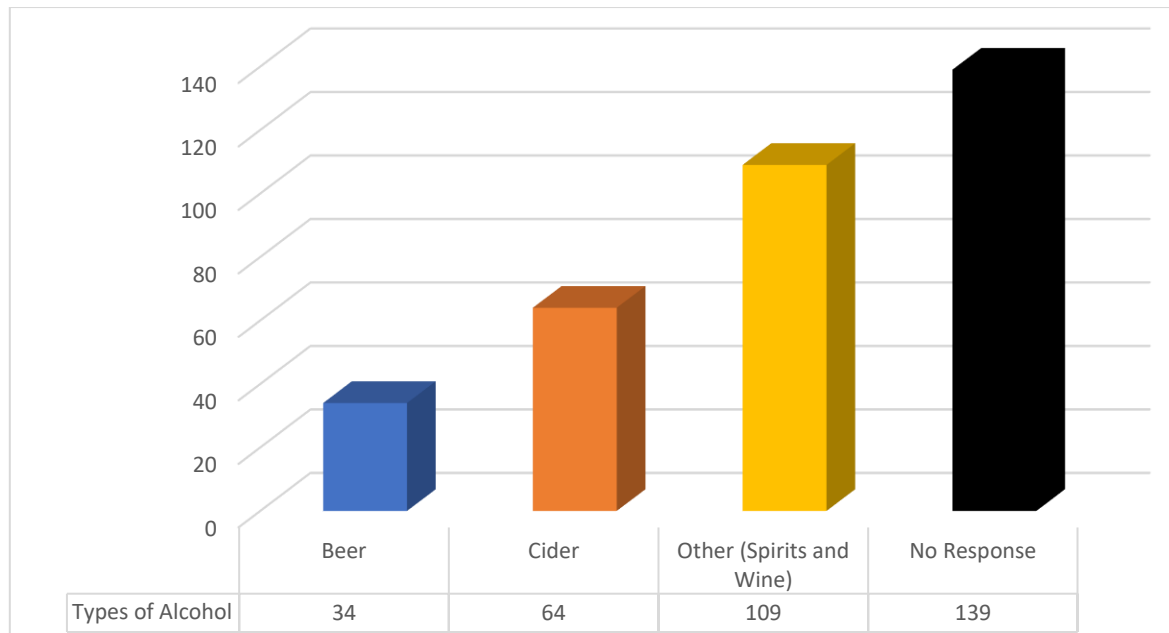


Figure 4.4: Type of alcohol consumed

The type of alcohol consumed the most over the 30 days was Other (Spirits and Wine) 109 (31.5%), followed by Ciders 64 (18.5%) and Beer 34 (9.8%). It is noted that a considerably large sum, 139 (40.2%) respondents engaged but did not complete this question.

4.3 Reliability and Validity Statistics

For the reliability statistics, a series of Cronbach alpha tests were run using the ordinal variables derived from the data collection. The results are summarised in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Reliability Statistics

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Identification	.811	4
Internalisation	.898	4
Trustworthiness	.908	5
Expertise	.862	5
Attractiveness	.896	5
Product – Match-up	.791	3
Purchase Intention – Flying Fish Seltzer Brand	.930	3
Purchase Intention – Flying Fish Seltzer Influencer	.961	3
Purchase Intention – Sky Vodka Brand	.951	3
Purchase Intention – Sky Vodka Influencer	.972	3

Table 4.1 shows the results with respect to all the scales for reliability analysis. Inter-rater reliability in this context refers to the consistency or agreement between items when they are independently assessed. In other words, it assesses whether the items are measuring the same

construct. A Cronbach alpha greater than a value of .70 indicates that the scale is reliable and good and values between 0.80 and .90 are regarded as excellent (Field, 2009). As seen in the table above, all the variables satisfy this requirement with *Purchase Intention – Sky Vodka Influencer* having the highest value ($\alpha = .972$, $n = 3$). *Product – Match-up* although had the lowest reliability relative to the others, still came in acceptable and good alpha scores ($\alpha = .791$, $n = 3$).

Before computing the scales as variables for further analysis, a check for the validity of the scales was done. For this, a series of Pearson's correlation tests were run, as shown in Annexures. For a scale to be considered valid, would need most of the correlations between items to be statistically significant. This was the case for all the items shown in Table 4.1.

The study then computed the variables using the mean responses of the items as per each scale.

4.4 Analysing whether identification and internalisation have a positive effect on Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness as well as Product Match-up.

In this section identification and internalisation were listed as dependent variables while the other variables were identified as outcome variables. For this reason, the study ran a series of multiple linear regression analyses to test whether independent variables had any causal effects on the outcome variables, the models and their corresponding statistics are demonstrated in Table 4.2 below:

Table 4.2: Hypothesis table with respect to Internalisation and Identification

Model Number	Hypothesis
H1:	<i>Internalisation and Identification will positively influence SM Influencer trustworthiness in SM alcohol ads.</i>
H2:	<i>Internalisation and Identification will positively influence SM Influencer expertise in SM alcohol ads.</i>
H3:	<i>Internalisation and Identification will positively influence SM Influencer attractiveness in SM alcohol ads.</i>
H4:	<i>Internalisation and Identification will positively influence SM Influencer product match-up in SM alcohol ads.</i>

The four hypotheses above guided further data analysis processes.

4.4.1 Descriptive Statistics – Regression Analysis

Table 4.3 shows the means and standard deviations of the models' six variables: Trustworthiness, Identification, Internalisation, Expertise, Product Match-up and Attractiveness.

Table 4.3: Description Statistics - Regression Analysis

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Trustworthiness	2.8969	.90325	297
Identification	3.4226	1.02600	297
Internalisation	2.6967	1.11392	297
Expertise	3.0915	.90227	290
Product Match-up	3.4321	.88616	292
Attractiveness	4.1498	.75559	292

As seen in Table 4.3 above, Attractiveness had the highest mean ($M = 4.1498$, $SD = .75559$) while internalisation showed the highest variance ($M = 2.6967$, $SD = 1.11392$). This means that respondents rated Attractiveness higher than the other scales compared to Internalisation which showed fluctuating responses meaning respondents had more varied responses.

4.4.2 Statistical Hypothesis Testing – Multiple Regression Model Summaries

Table 4.4 above displays the results of the model summaries. The shown predictor variables are Internalisation and Identification.

Table 4.4: Model Summaries

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Trustworthiness	.375 ^a	.140	.123	.44237
Expertise	.337 ^a	.114	.107	.85242

Product Match-up	.443 ^a	.196	.191	.79718
Attractiveness	.343 ^a	.118	.112	.71214

a. Predictors: Internalisation, Identification

b. Dependent Variables Per Model: Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness and Product Match-up

The Adjusted R Squared values show that all the models have low explanatory power as they are all between the 0.1 and 0.3 range. The model with Product Match-up as the outcome variable showed the highest explanatory power ($R^2 = .191$, $SE = .79718$). This means the predictor variables can weakly predict changes in the dependent variables. The next table (Table 4.5) shows whether the model is a good fit.

Table 4.5: ANOVA Statistics

Model	Sum of Squares	df	F	Sig.
Trustworthiness	241.497	296	18.506	<.001 ^b
Expertise	235.274	289	18.395	.<.001 ^b
Product Match-up	228.514	291	35.293	<.001 ^b
Attractiveness	166.137	291	19.297	<.001 ^b

a. Predictors: Internalisation, Identification

b. Dependent Variables Per Model: Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness and Product Match-up

Table 4.5 above shows that all models are a good fit as they are statistically significant. The model that had the best goodness of fit was on product match-up ($F(2,289) = 35.293$, $p < .01$). While all the models have statistical significance, the low explanatory power could indicate that the models are too complex. The researcher tested the independent variables for multicollinearity, and this was not present. The model could also potentially suffer from overfitting due to the sample size. The magnitude of the effects was reviewed in the coefficients table (Table 4.6) to assess the overall influence that the independent variables have on the outcome variable. The results are as follows:

Table 4.6: Coefficients Table - BETAs

Model	Product Match-			
	Trustworthiness	Expertise	Up	Attractiveness
Constant	1.866	2.211	2.125	3.220

Identification	.133	.061	.162	.229
Internalisation	.206	.252	.278	.053

. Predictors: Internalisation, Identification

Table 4.7: Coefficients Table - p-values

Model	Trustworthiness	Expertise	Product Match-	
			Up	Attractiveness
Identification	.010	.238	<.001 ^b	<.001 ^b
Internalisation	<.001 ^b	<.001 ^b	<.001 ^b	.182

b. Predictors: Internalisation, Identification

Table 4.8: Coefficients Table - T scores

Model	Trustworthiness	Expertise	Product Match-	
			Up	Attractiveness
Identification	2.610	1.182	3.381	5.335
Internalisation	4.376.	5.279	6.274	1.337

b. Predictors: Internalisation, Identification

In Tables 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8, Identification had the largest influence on Attractiveness ($\beta = .229$, $t = 5.335$, $<.001$). Furthermore, Identification had an impact on all the other outcome variables except Expertise which proved to be statistically insignificant. Moreover, Internalisation had a large influence on Product Match-Up ($\beta = .278$, $t = 6.274$, $<.001$) but had no significant impact on Attractiveness. Based on the results above, the study therefore accepted all the hypotheses.

4.5 Assessing whether people perceive ads differently based on influencer marketing.

This part of the analysis focused on testing whether people perceive a brand as more appealing when an influencer is included in the brand's advertising. In each pair, the respondents evaluated the same brand (1) when an influencer was not incorporated into the presented brand ad and (2) when an influencer was incorporated into the brand's presented ad. A pairwise sample t-test was used to test the differences. The results are as follows:

4.5.1 Statistical Hypothesis Testing – Descriptive Statistics

Table 4.9 below shows the descriptive statistical results of the t-tests.

Table 4.9: Paired Samples Descriptive Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Flying Fish Seltzer Brand	2.8305	354	1.35354	.07194
	Flying Fish Seltzer Influencer	2.3653	354	1.28191	.06813
Pair 2	Sky Vodka Brand	2.5442	347	1.35210	.07258
	Sky Vodka Influencer	2.2478	347	1.25903	.06759
Pair 3	Flying Fish Seltzer Brand	2.8217	359	1.35313	.07142
	Sky Vodka Brand	2.5492	359	1.35529	.07153
Pair 4	Flying Fish Seltzer Influencer	2.3584	346	1.27456	.06852
	Sky Vodka Influencer	2.2457	346	1.26020	.06775

In Table 4.9, the Flying Fish Seltzer brand demonstrated the highest mean ($M = 2.8305$, $SD = 1.35354$), while the Sky Vodka brand showed the highest variance ($M = 2.5492$, $SD = 1.35529$). What this means is that respondents rated the Flying Fish Seltzer brand higher against all other scales, while there were fluctuating responses for the Sky Vodka brand, essentially showing people had more varied responses. It can be noted that the means for the ads with influencers were less than those without the influencers.

4.5.2 Statistical Hypothesis Testing – Correlations

Table 4.10 demonstrates the correlations between each of the different pairs described in Table 4.9 above.

Table 4.10: Paired Samples Correlations

	N	Correlation	Significance
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				One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Flying Fish Seltzer Brand & Flying Fish Seltzer Influencer	354	.604	<.001	<.001
Pair 2	Sky Vodka Brand & Sky Vodka Influencer	347	.622	<.001	<.001
Pair 3	Flying Fish Seltzer Brand & Sky Vodka Brand	359	.524	<.001	<.001
Pair 4	Flying Fish Seltzer Influencer & Sky Vodka Influencer	346	.570	<.001	<.001

It is observed that Sky Vodka overall had the highest correlation ($r(354) = .622, p < .001$) which was moderately positive. Furthermore, when evaluating at the advertisement level the influencer ads had a stronger correlation than ads that did not contain influencers ($r(346) = .570, p < .001$) essentially meaning that their results were more like those of their counterparts that did not incorporate influencers.

4.5.3 Statistical Hypothesis Testing – Paired Samples test

Table 4.11: Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					Significance			
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference							One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df		
Pair 1	Flying Fish Seltzer Brand & Flying Fish Seltzer Influencer	.46516	1.17398	.06240	.34244	.58788	7.45	353	<.001	<.001

Pair 2	Sky Vodka Brand & Sky Vodka Influencer	.2963 5	1.13810	.06110	.17618	.41652	4.85	346	<.001	<.001
Pair 3	Flying Fish Seltzer Brand & Sky Vodka Brand	.2725 2	1.32185	.06976	.13532	.40972	3.90	358	<.001	<.001
Pair 4	Flying Fish Seltzer Influencer & Sky Vodka Influencer	.1127 2	1.17536	.06319	-.01156	.23700	1.78	345	.038	.075

Looking at Table 4.11 above, the pair that recorded the highest mean was Pair 1 ($M = .46516$, $SD = 1.17398$) while the pair that recorded the highest standard deviation was Pair 3 1 ($M = .27252$, $SD = 1.32185$). When observing the differences in means, all pairs were statistically significant (meaning that all the variables in the pairs are statistically different from one another) with the biggest difference within pair 1 ($t = 7.455$, $p < .001$). This is further shown in the paired samples effect sizes table in Table 4.12 below although all effect sizes are somewhat small when looking at Cohen's d statistic:

Table 4.12: Paired Samples Effect Sizes

			Standardiser ^a	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Pair 1	Flying Fish	Cohen's d	1.17398	.396	.288	.504
	Seltzer Brand	Hedges'	1.17648	.395	.287	.503
	Flying Fish Seltzer Influencer	correction				
Pair 2	Sky Vodka	Cohen's d	1.13810	.260	.153	.367
	Brand	Hedges'	1.14057	.260	.153	.366
	Sky Vodka Influencer	correction				

Pair 3	Flying Fish	Cohen's d	1.32185	.206	.101	.311
	Seltzer Brand	Hedges'	1.32463	.206	.101	.310
	Sky Vodka	correction				
Pair 4	Flying Fish	Cohen's d	1.17536	.096	-.010	.201
	Seltzer	Hedges'	1.17792	.096	-.010	.201
	Influencer	correction				
	Sky Vodka					
	Influencer					

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.

Cohen's d uses the sample standard deviation of the mean difference.

Hedges' correction uses the sample standard deviation of the mean difference, plus a correction factor.

4.6 Analysing the factors that influence purchase intention based on influencer ads.

For the last section of the analysis, the study investigated which factors had a significant influence on the purchase intention when viewing ads that contain influencers. The analysis was split at the brand level. The outcome variables as stated in section 4.3 were used as new independent variables in a multiple regression analysis.

4.6.1 Statistical Hypothesis Testing – Multiple Regression Descriptive Statistics

Table 4.13 below shows further multiple regression descriptive statistics.

Table 4.13: Descriptive Statistics - Flying Fish Seltzer as outcome variable

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Flying Fish Seltzer Influencer	2936.0057	11021.64284	301
PI			
Product Match-up	3.4092	.89332	301
Attractiveness	4.1267	.77481	301
Expertise	3.0563	.91700	301
Trustworthiness	2.8821	.91114	301

When analysing Table 4.13 above, the researcher observes that the purchase intention for Flying Fish Seltzer recorded the highest mean as well as the highest standard deviation (M =

2936.0057, SD = 11021.82800). Unfortunately, the results do not provide anything insightful or meaningful to conclude with.

Table 4.14: Descriptive Statistics - Sky Vodka Influencer Purchase Intention

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Sky Vodka Influencer PI	2993.7716	10721.82800	301
Product Match-up	3.4092	.89332	301
Attractiveness	4.1267	.77481	301
Expertise	3.0563	.91700	301
Trustworthiness	2.8821	.91114	301

When analysing Table 4.13 above, the purchase intention for Sky Vodka recorded the highest mean as well as the highest standard deviation (M = 2993.7716, SD = 10721.82800). Note that the average for Sky Vodka is slightly larger when compared to Flying Fish Seltzer.

Table 4.15: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.192 ^a	.037	.024	10888.69152	2.080

a. Predictors: (Constant), Trustworthiness, Attractiveness, Expertise, Product Match-up

b. Dependent Variable: Flying Fish Seltzer Influencer PI

Table 4.16: ANOVA statistics, Flying Fish Seltzer PI

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1348156799.119	4	337039199.780	2.843	.024 ^b
	Residual	35094826470.189	296	118563602.940		
	Total	36442983269.308	300			

a. Dependent Variable: Flying Fish Seltzer Influencer PI

b. Predictors: (Constant), Trustworthiness, Attractiveness, Expertise, Product Match-up

When analysing Tables 4.15 and 4.16 above, it can be noted that the linear regression model is a good fit ($R^2 = .024$, $F(4,296) = 2.843$, $p = .026$) but has very little explanatory power. The results suggest the model is valid, but it wouldn't do a good job in terms of trying to predict behaviours. The researcher can therefore conclude that for the Flying Fish Seltzer case, at least one of the independent variables does have an impact on purchase intention.

Table 4.17: Model Summary - Sky Vodka PI

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.148 ^a	.022	.009	10675.36881	2.177

a. Predictors: (Constant), Trustworthiness, Attractiveness, Expertise, Product Match-up

b. Dependent Variable: Sky Vodka Influencer PI

Table 4.18: ANOVA statistics, Sky Vodka PI

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	754082942.734	4	188520735.683	1.654	.161 ^b
	Residual	33733195750.913	296	113963499.158		
	Total	34487278693.647	300			

a. Dependent Variable: Sky Vodka Influencer PI

b. Predictors: (Constant), Trustworthiness, Attractiveness, Expertise, Product Match-up

When analysing Tables 4.17 and 4.18 above, the researcher observes the linear regression model is not a good fit ($R^2 = .009$, $F(4,296) = 1.654$, $p = .161$) and has very little explanatory power. The results suggest the model is not valid and it wouldn't do a good job in terms of trying to predict behaviors. Therefore, for researcher would accept a null hypothesis for the sky vodka case and conclude that the predictors have no impact or influence on purchase intention.

Table 4.19: Flying Fish Seltzer Coefficients Table

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics
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		B	Std. Error	Beta	Tolerance		VIF
1	(Constant)	-8460.013	3993.269		-2.119	.035	
	Product Match-up	1770.267	877.813	.143	2.017	.045	1.556
	Attractiveness	1242.786	841.424	.087	1.477	.141	1.075
	Expertise	835.291	847.025	.069	.986	.325	1.527
	Trustworthiness	-805.202	900.978	-.067	-.894	.372	1.705

a. Dependent Variable: Flying Fish Seltzer Influencer PI

From Table 4.19 above, Product Match-up proved to be the only statistically significant variable ($\beta = 1770.267$, $t = 2.017$, $p = .045$). The results mean that product Match-up was the only variable that had a significant impact on purchase intention concerning the Flying Fish Seltzer ad, the others had no significant impact.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter showed and discussed the study's statistical analysis findings. The chapter was dominated by descriptive tests and multiple linear regression models to test given hypotheses. The findings from this chapter are further interpreted and discussed in the next chapter which is Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the outcomes of the analysis outlined in the previous chapter. This chapter seeks to delineate the primary concerns identified in the analysis to interpret the findings and correlate them with the existing literature and prior research.

5.2 Discussion of Results on Social Media Activity

The analysis of the results shows that over the last 30 days, respondents indicated they regularly engage with Instagram (63.90%) compared to Facebook (17.10%). This comes as no surprise according to Natalie (2023) the age segment between 18 and 24 years consists of the highest Instagram users in South Africa. Instagram is particularly popular amongst this age group because it allows them to engage and display their interests and ideas (Nurhandayani et al., 2019). Participants were given a choice between Facebook or Instagram, if combined 81% of the participants engage in either Facebook or Instagram regularly. Facebook and Instagram are some of the most popular social media platforms in South Africa according to Asmal (2022), especially amongst this age group given the fact that they were born in the digital age and rely heavily on social media as part of their social skills.

5.3 Discussion of Results on Alcohol Consumption

The results show that of the total 346 respondents engaging with this question of the types of alcohol consumed over the past 30 days, most respondents 139 (40.20%) decided not to answer the question and therefore was highlighted as missing in the data analysis. Respondents were provided an option to indicate none of the above but still decided not to answer the question.

Nonetheless, 217 (59.80%) respondents combined indicated consuming alcohol from one of the types available. Other (spirits and wines) came up top as favourite amongst respondents 109 (31.50%) as most consumed over the past 30 days, followed by cider 64 (18.50%) and then beer 34 (9.80%). A study conducted by Eighty20, a consumer research business in South Africa, concluded after a countrywide 20,000+ survey among adults that at least 50% of South Africans have consumed alcohol in the past month (Eighty20, 2023). It also goes as far as stating beer is the favourable choice of beer ranking at 41%, overly swayed by the males at 62% compared to females at 36%. 72% of males indicated beer being their preferred choice of alcohol. The results from both studies are similar in the sense that both achieve the 50% mark, with this study's results exceeding them by almost another 10%. The study had more female

participants, which potentially provides reasons why the beer option was less than anticipated in comparison to the Eighty20 study.

5.4 Discussion of whether identification and internalisation have a positive effect on Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness as well and Product Match-up.

The findings support hypotheses H1, H2, H3 and H4, that identification and internalisation have a positive influence on trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness and Product Match-up. The findings also informed the study that should one use the model, it would not do a great job at predicting the outcome variables. This may be because identification and internalisation are rarely combined as constructs but treated as separate constructs, as a result, the model may be too complex to provide substantial and significant value. Furthermore, it could be due to these factors being abstract concepts that would better be explained using qualitative methods. The model has no reference nor been tested in previous literature and could benefit from a more exploratory approach. Kelman (1961) developed the theory of source identification and source internalisation, to evaluate the persuasion process. According to El Hedhli et al. (2021), identification is the extent the recipient identifies through establishing similarities or attractiveness with the source message best used in low-involvement environments. Alcohol advertising falls within the low involvement category according to Vaughn, 1986. It is the belief that alcohol does not require an in-depth thinking process to decide on whether to purchase or consume and therefore the use of an attractive endorser has the power to persuade a customer.

Internalisation on the other hand is the extent, persuasion and acceptance of the information dependent on the expertise, trustworthiness and reliability of the source best used in high-involvement environments (El Hedhli et al., 2021). Campbell and Chung (2022) believe alcohol should be considered in the high involvement category due to the variety of options, types, flavours and variants alcohol comes with. It is the belief given the vast amount of alcohol options provided in this day and age, the process of purchasing or consuming alcohol requires more time than ever and therefore an experienced endorser has the power to persuade a customer given their knowledge about alcohol. El Hedhli et al. (2021) believe source 'celebrity' credibility simultaneously plays both central and peripheral routes in persuasive messaging although the setting is dependent on purchase intent and product involvement. Similarly, for SMIs this is a fair judgement, depending on customers' purchase intent and level of involvement, customers may lean towards either identification or internalisation to be persuaded.

The only outcome variable to show a decent level of indication of impact is Product Match-up. The extent to which an endorser and product fit, the more it increases the chances of believing and trusting the recommendations (Nam & Dân, 2018). Convincing Product Match-up is based on customer perception of an endorser and a product sharing similarities whether it is by profession, lifestyle or personality. Customers will tend to trust an endorser's message if the product is closely aligned with the same profession, lifestyle or values. Product Match-up in alcohol ads has elements of both identification and internalisation because youth find SMIs relatable and the closer the product fits the more customers trust the endorsement.

If one investigates identification and internalisation as independent variables (separate constructs) and its impact on outcome variables. Identification has the biggest impact on Attractiveness but also plays a significant role in Product Match-up and Trustworthiness. This is seen in the results because youth see SMIs as relatable, accessible, and approachable (Berryman & Kavka, 2017). The relatability has resulted in youth wanting to be like or imitate the influencers they see and like on social media (Hendriks, Gebhardt, & van den Putte, 2017). As a result, they identify with the SMIs and the products they are associated with because they believe and trust them. Identification had no impact on Expertise, based on the definitions provided and researchers understanding, the Identification process does not require an endorser's knowledge and expertise to persuade a customer.

Internalisation has the biggest impact on Product Match-up, as well as Expertise and Trustworthiness. According to Kapitan and Silvera (2016) is the act of incorporating beliefs, values and attitudes from a source into one's belief system. Internalisation is the process of in-depth analysis and information processing, which usually takes a longer time to make a purchase decision. Internalisation considers an endorser's expertise, knowledge and honesty and therefore the product and endorser fit must make sense for the customer. Internationalisation had no impact on Attractiveness because an endorser's attractiveness or similarity is not enough to convince a customer's thought process and requires more information to be persuaded.

5.5 Discussion of whether people perceive ads differently based on influencer marketing.

The study questionnaire contained a section where the researcher asked participants their perceived level of purchase intent based on the social media ads they saw. The social media ads were of two brands, Flying Fish Seltzer Seltzer and Sky Vodka taken from their Instagram

pages. The researcher purposely chose the selected alcohol types (Seltzer and Vodka) because of their non gender bias in their marketing campaigns as well as both had products or flavours that were new into the market, launched within the last 2 years. In the Eighty20 report, Vodka and Flavoured Alcoholic Beverages accommodated a more even split between genders although there was a slight skew to males for Vodka and a slight skew to females for Flavoured Alcoholic Beverages (Eighty20, 2023).

Four social media ads were consecutively shown and questioned, two were Flying Fish Seltzer Seltzer and the other two were Sky Vodka. Between both brand ads, one of each branded ad had a social media influencer in the ad. Only the ads were captured and the captions that typically come with Instagram ads were in the questionnaire. the study wanted participants to focus on the ad with no other cues since Instagram is mainly a video and image social networking platform, this is where users' attention starts and most of the time ends.

The researcher then tested to see whether the perception of purchase intention differed from the ads that contained influencers and the ads that did not. The findings of the results demonstrate there were differences in how the participants perceived the ads, however, the differences were minimal and not enough to make predictions between the two. Branded content with no influencers gained more favourability as opposed to branded content with influencers, yet again the differences were not a significant factor. The researcher felt that the study could benefit further if another validation testing method was used such as A/B testing or even other qualitative techniques such as interviews or focus groups. Overall, the findings based on the mean, inform the study that there was minimal inclination to purchase intent after seeing the ads. Both brands have been in existence in the market and are fully active in advertising not only on social media but above-the-line and below-the-line activations. Participants may be already familiar with the brand and product, either seen the marketing campaigns and/or consumed the product. Potentially, they would have already made up their minds and developed an attitude towards the brand and products after seeing or consuming the product. Participants may have also made up their minds and not be interested in the Vodka and Seltzer beverages.

5.6 Discussion on factors that influence purchase intention based on influencer ads.

The remaining hypotheses H5, H6, H7 and H8, investigated if SMIs and their perceived characteristics (trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and product match-up) in social media alcohol ads had a positive impact on purchase intention. The analysis was based on the

use of the Flying Fish Seltzer and Sky Vodka ads with influencers in the questionnaire. The results from the findings confirm only product match-up had a significant impact however, it was only for one of the ads, which was Flying Fish Seltzer. Lim et al., (2017) received similar results in their study, whereby product match-up had a positive relationship with purchase intention. Multiple endorsement studies have concluded for advertising to be successful, there must be congruency between the product and the endorser (Kamins, 1990; Lim et al., 2017; Ezenwafor et al., 2021; Ju & Lou, 2022). According to Nam and Dân (2018) the greater the product-influencer match-up, the greater the purchase intent. Similarly, in this study, the youth observed a positive correlation between the SMI and one of the products, which significantly influenced their intention to make a purchase. The same can be said for the opposite result, the less the congruency of product match-up, the less convinced a customer will be towards the message and persuasion. This could be the reason behind the result of the study only receiving one positive correlation for one of two of the ads showcased.

The remaining three characteristics; trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness were found to have no impact on purchase intention. These results either agree or disagree with previous literature. Those in agreement such as Ohanian (1991), Lim et al., (2017), Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) AlFarraj et al., (2021) found no significant impact between the three perceived SMI characteristics and purchase intention. According to Weismueller et al., (2020) endorsement studies by Ohanian (1991) and colleagues in literature were based on traditional celebrities and in mainstream media. As this study has mentioned, there is a difference between traditional celebrities and SMIs as well as social media and mainstream media. Therefore, characteristics such as trustworthiness are not significant in cases of purchase intent when customers are well aware of the use and investment of high-profile celebrities as endorsers by brands. SMIs have an edge over traditional celebrities in terms of the power of persuasion because people view SMIs as more trustworthy and relatable (Vrontis et al., 2021). Hence, those who disagree with these results Djafarova and Rushworth (2017), Weismueller et al., (2020) and Dalangin et al. (2021) found to have a positive significant impact on purchase intention. In all these studies, participants regarded the SMIs as credible and as a result, had a higher propensity to purchase a product endorsed by them. Consistent in the findings was the ability of participants to relate to the SMIs (perceived attractiveness), believing in the products they recommended (perceived trustworthiness) and trusting in the information (perceived expertise) presented.

5.7 Conclusion

The study shows the influence of identification and internalization on trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness and product match-up. The study's findings support hypotheses suggesting a positive influence, although weaknesses in model prediction power suggest a need for further exploration into the usefulness of the SII and the SLT on which the model variables were extracted. Furthermore, the study explores how people perceive advertisements differently based on influencer marketing, revealing nuanced insights into purchase intent and the role of influencers in shaping consumer attitudes. Notably, while product match-up demonstrates a significant impact, other perceived characteristics like trustworthiness and expertise show mixed results, indicating the need for a better understanding of influencer advertising effects on alcohol purchase intentions among the youth. The next chapter concludes the study.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study. To recap, the study was carried out to assess the purchase intention of South African youth, specifically how it was influenced by alcohol advertising through social media influencers. The chapter starts with a summary of findings on this matter before a brief discussion of the findings in relation to each of the study's objectives. The study's implications for practice and further research are also given.

6.2 Summary of the Findings

The study investigated how people's identification and internalisation with influencers affect their trust, expertise, attractiveness, and perceptions of product match-up in marketing. It discovered that when individuals identify with influencers, they become attracted to them, they tend to trust them more which in turn influences their intention to purchase advertised products – in this case, alcohol. Furthermore, the study found that internalisation with an influencer also enhances perceptions of leading to increased trust, viewing them as experts and a greater likelihood of responding positively to the advertisements. However, while the match-up between influencer and product plays a significant role in purchase intention, factors such as the trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise of influencers do not seem to have a major influence in this process. However, overall, the youths tend to trust and identify with influencers, especially among younger demographics, which significantly influences their decisions to buy certain products.

6.2.1 To assess whether identification and internalisation have a positive effect on Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness as well as Product Match-up

The findings show that when consumers identify with or internalise the message delivered by an SMI, they perceive the source as more trustworthy. This trust can influence their intentions to purchase alcohol. Similarly, identification and internalization can enhance perceptions of the influencer's expertise. When consumers feel a connection with the influencer, they are more likely to attribute greater knowledge and expertise to the influencer, and this also positively influences their intentions to purchase alcohol. Identification with an influencer can also enhance perceptions of attractiveness, leading to a more positive evaluation of the ad's messages and purchase intentions. Product match-up refers to the alignment between the influencer and the promoted product in terms of profession, lifestyle, or values, and when the consumers identify with or internalise the influencer's message, they are more likely to perceive

a strong match between the influencer and the product, increasing their trust and willingness to respond to the advert positively.

6.2.2 To examine whether people perceive ads differently based on influencer marketing

The study investigated how consumers perceive ads with and without influencer advertising. Participants viewed social media ads for Flying Fish Seltzer and Sky Vodka, some featuring influencers and others not. While there were slight differences in perceived purchase intent, the overall impact of influencer presence was not very large. The findings suggest that influencer marketing may have limited influence on purchase intentions for these brands. However, some limitations may have affected this outcome.

6.2.3 To analyse the factors that influence purchase intention based on influencer ads

While product match-up significantly affected purchase intention, other factors like trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness of SMIs showed no significant impact. This differed from some other studies, possibly due to differences between traditional celebrities and SMIs and between social media and traditional media. Overall, participants tended to relate to SMIs and trust the products they endorsed, indicating the influence of perceived attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise on alcohol purchase intention among the youth.

6.3 Implications

Given the evolution of endorser literature from traditional celebrities in mainstream media to social media influencers in social media as marketing strategies, this research presents an important contribution to theory and practice. The study investigated the influence of alcohol advertising and social media influencers on purchase intention amongst South African youth.

The first analysis of the results confirmed the hypotheses to be statistically significant to support the relationship between source internalisation, source identification and social media characteristics. Source internalisation presented a positive impact on product match-up, trustworthiness and expertise. Source identification presented a positive impact on product match-up, attractiveness and trustworthiness. This coincides with the founder, Kelman (1961) of the source identification and source internalisation theory and more recent literature (El Hedhli et al., 2021). However, the present study takes on a different approach and examines social media influencers in alcohol marketing, adding a new layer to existing literature related to social media influencers. When making use of SMIs, marketers should consider the type of product and level of involvement required from a customer to convince them to purchase. The

higher the involvement, the more the customer draws on source internalisation from a SMI and the opposite can be said for low involvement and source identification.

The second analysis of the results explores the perceived difference in purchase intent based on ads with social media influencers. There was no significant difference in purchase intent based on the ads presented. Theoretical contribution opens up opportunities for future studies to explore alcohol advertising and the use of social media influencers. Previous studies have identified the appeal social media influencers have in alcohol advertisements, however limited studies explore the purchase intent of social media influencers in alcohol ads. It is the responsibility of marketers in the alcohol industry to use SMI responsibly ensuring all regulatory laws and regulations are adhered to.

The third analysis of the results only confirmed product match-up to have a significant impact on purchase intent based on alcohol brand social media advertisements. The remaining SMI characteristics in this study did not have a significant impact on purchase intent, which coincides with existing literature. However, the present study not only examines in the context of alcohol advertising as well as youth in South Africa. It has been identified the lack of literature providing context of social media influencers and alcohol advertising in South Africa and Africa. For marketers, the selection of SMI must be the right product fit to ensure congruency, based on the findings, product match-up was the consistent positive variable throughout the analysis. Also, an opportunity to use SMIs to drive responsible drinking campaigns given their effectiveness in persuasion.

Overall, the findings imply that authorities must relook the adequacy of alcohol advertising regulations and practices in protecting impressionable youths from SMI advertising. As shown, SMI can effectively contribute to the intention to purchase alcohol among youths. It is also important to educate the youths that SMI advertising may not mirror true life realities and should be emulated with care or not be emulated at all.

6.4 Recommendations to Practitioners

Marketers and brand custodians face the complex task of identifying suitable social media influencers to promote their products or services. In this era of digital communication, the selection process has evolved significantly. No longer can marketers rely solely on an influencer's popularity or physical appeal. Instead, a more strategic approach is necessary—one that considers the alignment between the SMI and the brand. Recent studies and existing literature consistently highlight the impact of Product Match fit on consumer behavior. When

an SMI's content seamlessly aligns with the brand's offerings, it enhances credibility and persuasiveness. Customers are more likely to consider and purchase a product when the endorsement feels authentic and relevant. Consequently, marketers must prioritize the evaluation of Product Match fit during the influencer selection process.

SMIs, whether pursuing it as a full-time career or as supplementary income, face the challenge of representing multiple brands. However, the days of endorsing every interested brand are over. To maintain authenticity and credibility, SMIs must be selective in their brand affiliations. By doing so, they remain true to their personal brand and retain the trust of their followers. Consumers, increasingly savvy within the digital age, can discern when an SMI's endorsement lacks genuine alignment with the product.

While mega influencers and celebrities once dominated the influencer marketing landscape, nano-influencers have emerged as powerful players. Despite their smaller follower base, nano-influencers possess a unique advantage—their common interests with their followers. These niche influencers foster deeper engagement and wield significant influence over their dedicated audience. Marketers should recognize the potential of nano-influencers and explore collaborations beyond the mainstream.

In the context of the self-regulated alcohol industry, responsible advertising practices are crucial. Key policy decision-makers and enforcers must establish tighter guidelines for alcohol endorsements by SMIs. All content endorsed by SMIs should prominently display age restrictions and explicitly indicate that it is an advertisement. Failure to implement such measures could lead to reputational damage for both the influencer and the brand. Additionally, customers should have a mechanism to report any violations.

6.5 Limitations and Future Research

Whilst the study may have contributed to existing research, it however comes with its own limitations that could be opportunities for future research. First, the study only conducted a quantitative research method, limiting the data collection to an online survey. Future researchers should consider qualitative approaches or mixed-method approaches. This may provide deeper insights and the outcomes of the qualitative data collection method will offer more clarity on the veracity of the survey results.

Second, the alcohol brand and type of alcohol in the questionnaire were limited to two. There are many different types of alcohol and alcohol brands. Therefore, interpretation and

application of the findings must be done with this in mind. Future studies may expand the types and numbers using the paper's conceptual model.

The alcohol advertisements presented to the respondents were only static and this could have affected their appeal. Future researchers should consider video formats, as part of the questionnaire experience. Most of the content consumed on social media is in video format, especially among the youth (Evans, 2023).

Significant amount of respondents (40%) did not answer the alcohol consumption question in the survey. These could have been non-drinkers and therefore potentially skewed the data. For future research, consider only focusing on respondents who a

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CONSENT LETTER

Study Survey

Dear Participant,

My name is Sikhanyiso Mdlalose, a Master of Business Administration student at the Wits Business School registered under the Faculty of Commerce under the supervision of Dr Thomas Anning-Dorson. To fulfil the requirements of the master's program, I am undertaking a research project to examine " Purchase intention of South African youth and alcohol advertising through social media influencers ". I have a prepared a questionnaire to gain insights into the effect of social media influencers in alcohol advertising.

I would like to invite you to participate in this survey which will take approximately 5 minutes. Please note that participation in this survey is entirely optional. All information you enter will be kept strictly confidential. Your responses will be used purely for research purposes and shared in aggregate form, preserving your anonymity. There are no personal identities to be collected in your responses. You may be guaranteed that your privacy and confidentiality are of my highest concern.

If you have any questions regarding this research study, please contact my supervisor Professor Thomas Anning Dorson via email at: thomas.dorson.anning@wits.ac.za. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za. By proceeding to

complete this survey, you agree that you are anonymously and voluntarily participating in this survey.

- ☐ Yes, Proceed
- ☐ No, Not interested

APPENDIX B: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Q1 To which gender identity do you most identify?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non-binary / third gender
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q2 What age did you turn on your last birthday?

- ☐ <18
- ☐ 18 - 21
- ☐ 22 - 25
- ☐ 26+

Skip To: End of Survey If What age did you turn on your last birthday? = <18

Skip To: End of Survey If What age did you turn on your last birthday? = 26+

Q3 Which of the following do you use regularly, that is in the last 30 days? Choose where applicable?

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ None of these

Q4 Which of the following types of alcohol have you consumed most in the past 30 days?

- ☐ Beer
- ☐ Cider
- ☐ Other (Spirits and Wine)
- ☐ None of the above

The next set of questions are images and statements. On a scale of 1 to 5, whereby 1 is Strongly Disagree and 5 is Strongly Agree, please indicate your level of agreement with each statement after seeing the image.

Q5: SM & Brand Below is an image of a social media advertisement taken from Flying Fish Seltzer Instagram page.

	1.Strongly disagree (1)	2. Somewhat disagree (2)	3. Neither agree nor disagree (3)	4. Somewhat agree (4)	5. Strongly agree (5)
I am more likely to want to look for this product after seeing this ad? (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am more likely to want to try the product after seeing this ad? (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am more likely to purchase this product after seeing this ad? (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



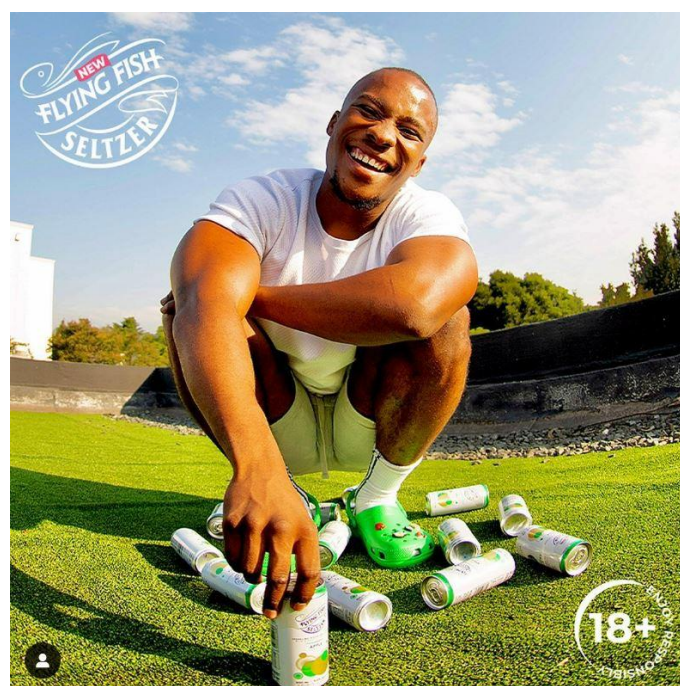
Q6: SM & Brand Below is an image of a social media advertisement taken from Sky Vodka Instagram page.

	1. Strongly disagree (1)	2. Somewhat disagree (2)	3. Neither agree nor disagree (3)	4. Somewhat agree (4)	5. Strongly agree (5)
I am more likely to want to look for this product after seeing this ad? (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am more likely to want to try the product after seeing this ad? (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am more likely to purchase this product after seeing this ad? (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



Q7: SMI and Brand Below is an image of a social media advertisement taken from Flying Fish Seltzer's Instagram page with Zamani Mbatha.

	1. Strongly disagree (1)	2. Somewhat disagree (2)	3. Neither agree nor disagree (3)	4. Somewhat agree (4)	5. Strongly agree (5)
I am more likely to want to look for this product after seeing this ad? (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am more likely to want to try the product after seeing this ad? (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am more likely to purchase this product after seeing this ad? (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



Q8: SMI & Brand Below is an image of a social media advertisement taken from Sky Vodka's Instagram page with Bradley Ndlovu.

	1. Strongly disagree (1)	2. Somewhat disagree (2)	3. Neither agree nor disagree (3)	4. Somewhat agree (4)	5. Strongly agree (5)
I am more likely to want to look for this product after seeing this ad? (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am more likely to want to try the product after seeing this ad? (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am more likely to purchase this product after seeing this ad? (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



The next set of questions are statements. On a scale of 1 to 5, whereby 1 is Strongly Disagree and 5 is Strongly Agree, please indicate your level of agreement with each statement.

Q9: Trustworthiness - Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	1. Strongly disagree (1)	2. Somewhat disagree (2)	3. Neither agree nor disagree (3)	4. Somewhat agree (4)	5. Strongly agree (5)
The social media influencers I follow are honest (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The social media influencers I follow are sincere. (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The social media influencers I follow are dependable. (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The social media influencers I follow are reliable. (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The social media influencers I follow are trustworthy. (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q10: **Expertise** - Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	1. Strongly disagree (1)	2. Somewhat disagree (2)	3. Neither agree nor disagree (3)	4. Somewhat agree (4)	5. Strongly agree (5)
The social media influencers I follow are experts. (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The social media influencers I follow are knowledgeable. (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The social media influencers I follow are experienced. (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The social media influencers I follow are qualified. (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The social media influencers I follow are skilled. (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q11: **Attractiveness** - Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	1. Strongly disagree (1)	2. Somewhat disagree (2)	3. Neither agree nor disagree (3)	4. Somewhat agree (4)	5. Strongly agree (5)
The social media influencers I follow are attractive. (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The social media influencers I follow are charismatic. (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The social media influencers I follow are good-looking. (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The social media influencers I follow are beautiful/handsome. (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The social media influencers I follow have attractive lifestyles (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q12: Product Match Up - Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	1. Strongly disagree (1)	2. Somewhat disagree (2)	3. Neither agree nor disagree (3)	4. Somewhat agree (4)	5. Strongly agree (5)
The social media influencers I follow, brand endorsements are appropriate and fitting. (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The product match fit between the social media influencers I follow enhances my trust in the product. (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The social media influencers I follow use the products they endorse. (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q13: **Internalisation** - Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	1. Strongly disagree (1)	2. Somewhat disagree (2)	3. Neither agree nor disagree (3)	4. Somewhat agree (4)	5. Strongly agree (5)
I tend to internalize the opinions and behaviours of social media influencers (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I tend to internalize the expertise demonstrated by social media influencers (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I tend to internalize the reliability of social media influencers (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I tend to internalize the preferences and lifestyle choices of social media influencers (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q14: Identification - Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	1. Strongly disagree (1)	2. Somewhat disagree (2)	3. Neither agree nor disagree (3)	4. Somewhat agree (4)	5. Strongly agree (5)
I tend to identify with social media influencers who look like me. (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I tend to identify with social media influencers who are similar to me. (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I tend to identify with social media influencers who are attractive. (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I tend to identify with social media influencers who are authentic. (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐